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King Arthur and the Table Round

In Two Volumes

Volume Two

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King Arthur and the Table Round

Tales chiefly after the Old French of Crestien of Troyes with an Account of Arthurian Romance, and Notes by William Wells Newell

In two Volumes

Volume Two

A. P. WATT & SON
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Perceval

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Youthful Ambition

WHEN trees bloom, thickets leaf, and fields are green, when birds sing sweetly at morn, and all things flame with joy, the son of the Widowed Dame of the Vast Solitary Forest rose and saddled his hunter, taking three of his darts, for it pleased him to visit the sowers who were tilling the fields of his mother, with harrows eight or ten. As he entered the wood, his heart bounded within him, for the sake of the pleasant season, and the songs of the merry birds; because of the sweetness of the sovereign time, he gave his hunter the rein, and left him free to feed on the fresh sprouting grass, while he, who had skill to throw the darts he bore, roved and cast them, now behind and now before, now alow and now aloft, until approached five knights, armed in all their array. Their weapons made a loud noise, as fast as they rode, for the oaks hurtled against their arms, their mail tinkled, and their lances clashed upon their shields. The varlet, who heard them, but could not see, wondered and cried: "By my soul! my mother, my lady, who telleth me true, saith that devils are wilder than aught in the world; she saith so, to make me cross myself, that I may be safe from them; but I will not, no;

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instead, I will strike the strongest with one of these darts, so that he will not dare come near me, he nor any of his mates, I trow!"

¶ Thus to himself said the boy; but when the knights issued from the wood, with their beautiful shields and shining helms, such as never before had he seen, and he beheld green and vermilion, gold, azure, and silver gleam in the sun, he wondered and cried: "Ha, Lord God, mercy! These are angels I see! I did wrong, to call them devils; my mother, who fableth not, saith that naught is so fair as angels, save God, who is more beautiful than all; here is one so fair, that the others own not a tenth of his beauty; my mother saith, that one ought to believe in God, bow the knee, and adore Him; him will I worship, and the rest who are with him." So speaking, he cast himself on the ground, repeating his credo, and the prayers his mother had taught him. The lord said to his knights: "Stand back, for this vassal hath fallen to the earth for fear; if we should approach, all at once, he would go out of his mind, and not be able to tell me aught I wish to learn."

¶ The others halted, while the knight advanced: "Varlet, be not afraid." "Not I, by the Saviour in whom I believe! Are you not God?" "By my faith, no." "Who are you,

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then?" "I am a knight." "A knight? I never saw one, nor heard of one; but you are fairer than God; would I were like you, as shining and as perfect!" With that, the knight approached, and cried: "Hast thou seen, in this plain, five knights and two maids?" The youth, who had his mind elsewhere, grasped the lance: "Fair dear sir, you who call yourself a knight, what is this you carry?" "Methinks, I am finely helped! Fair sweet friend, I looked for tidings, and you ask me questions; yet I will tell you; 't is my lance." "Do you throw it, as I do my darts?" "Nay youth, thou art simple; I hold it, and strike from the hand." "One of my darts, then, is better; for when I please, I kill beasts and birds with them, as far as a bolt would carry." "Varlet, I care not; tell me, didst thou see the knights and the maids?" The boy grasped the horn of the shield: "What is this, and what is it for?" "Youth, 't is thine art, to put me off; but I will answer, for I like thee; 't is called a shield." "Shield?" "Aye, and 't is not to be scorned, for it helpeth me so well, that if any man aim at me, it wardeth the blow; 't is the service it rendereth."

℄ Meantime, the others came up, and inquired: "Sir, what saith this Welshman?" "So God save me, he knoweth not our laws! Of all he

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seeth, he asketh, what name it hath, and what is its use." "Sir, be assured, that all Welshmen are by nature stupid as beasts of the field; this youth is as dull; silly is the man who keepeth his company, unless it be to amuse his leisure." "I know not, so God keep me! but ere I part, I will inform him of all he wisheth to know." Again the knight demanded: "Youth, if it be no trouble, tell me of the five knights, and of the maidens, if thou hast met or seen them." The varlet pulled the skirt of the hauberk: "Fair dear sir, how namest this thing?" "Varlet, dost thou not see that it is a coat of iron? 'T is heavy, like iron; thou seest, 't is of iron." "Of that know I naught; but so God save me, 't is fair! What is it for?" "Youth, 't is easy to tell; if thou shouldst shoot at me an arrow or dart, thou couldst not hurt me." "Sir knight, God forbid that stags and does wore such coats! I could not kill them, and I would not hunt them." "Varlet, so God aid thee, give me news of the knights and the maids." The lad, who was simple, asked: "Were you born so?" "Nay, youth, no man can be so born." "Who drest you, then?" "Varlet, I will tell you; 't is not five days since King Arthur dubbed me knight, and gave me these arms. Now answer me, the knights who passed, and the

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maids they led, rode they at pace or flight?" "Sir, behold yonder wood, the loftiest on the mountain; 't is the pass of Valdone." "What of that, fair brother?" "There are the laborers of my mother, who are tilling her fields; if this troop hath gone by, they will know." The knights said they would accompany him, if he would point out the way; the youth caught his hunter, and they repaired to the field where the peasants were harrowing the ground, which they had sown with oats. When they set eyes on their youthful lord, the hinds shook with terror, because of the knights who were with him; for they knew, if he had learned the truth, that he would choose to become a knight, and his mother would go out of her mind, for she sought to keep him from seeing knights, or hearing of their estate. ℭ The youth inquired: "Did you see five knights and three maids, who went this way?" "They are not yet out of the pass," the peasants replied. The varlet said to the knight, who had conversed with him so long: "Sir, yonder went the knights and the maids. Now tell me of the king who maketh knights, where he is oftenest to be found." "Varlet, I will tell thee; the king sojourneth at Carlisle; the fourth day hath not passed since I was present and saw him; if you do not find him, there

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will be one to inform you, you will not be turned away."

¶ The knight departed, for he was in haste to overtake his troop; but the youth sped home, where he found his mother sad, because of his long absence. When she perceived him, she did not conceal her joy, but like a mother who loves her son, ran to embrace him, calling him "dear son, dear son," a hundred times. "My heart hath been pained by your long delay; I was so vexed, that almost I am dead of grief; where have you been this great while?" "Mother, I will answer, I will not lie; great joy have I had of a thing I have seen. Did you not tell me that the angels of Our Lord are so beautiful, that in the world are no creatures so lovely?" "Fair son, 't is true: I said so, and I repeat it." "Hush, mother! To-day did I not see the fairest things, who rove the wild waste? Fairer, I trow, are they than God and his angels all." His mother clasped him, and cried: "Fair son, commend thyself to God; I have terror for thy sake; methinks thou hast seen the fearsome angels, who slay all they approach." "Nay, truth, mother, not so; they say they are called knights." When she heard the name, his mother swooned; and after she came to herself, cried like a desperate creature: "Alas, wretch that I am! Dear

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child, I wished to keep you from chivalry, so that you might never hear of it, nor see it, nor become a knight. You were all the comfort I had, for God hath left me nothing more, wherewith my heart may be content." The boy minded not what his mother said: "Give me to eat," he exclaimed. "I know not of what you reason, but fain would I go to the king who maketh knights, and go I shall, whoever deny." His mother detained him as long as she might, and fashioned for him raiment, a great canvas shirt, with breeches after the manner of Wales, and coat and cape he had, lined with skin of the deer. In this manner three days went by, until his mother could keep him no longer.

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Mother's Advice

WHEN the hour of parting came, bitterly his mother wept, kissing and embracing him. "Dear child, 't is great grief to see you go; you will arrive at the court of the king, and sue for arms; you will not be refused; he will bestow them, I am sure. When you employ them, what will happen? How will you fare when you attempt what you have never done nor seen others do? I fear the end will be evil. Dear son, I will give you a lesson which shall profit you much, if you bear it in mind. Soon will you be a knight, if it please God, and so I would have it be. If you find, far or near, a lady who needeth aid, or a maiden uncounselled, counsel them, if they ask it; for therein lieth good report, and he who payeth no honor to ladies loseth his own. Serve ladies and maids, and you will everywhere be respected; and if you court one, take heed not to annoy her, and do nothing to displease her. 'T is a great honor to kiss a maid, if so much she granteth; for my sake, demand no more, if more she be not willing to give; and if, out of your suit and her own kindness, she will bestow on you a ring, a purse, or a girdle, I permit you to take the ring, and carry the purse. Dear son, an-

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other thing: keep company with no man a long time together without demanding his name; for by the name is known the man. Converse with worthies, and consort with such; for a worthy man never giveth bad advice to any who keepeth his company. Above all, I entreat you, pray to Our Lord, in churches and monasteries, that He may grant you honor in this present world, and enable you so to conduct yourself, that you may come to a good end." "Mother, what is a church?" "Child, 't is a place where is made the sacrifice of Him who created heaven and earth, and filled the world with men and women." "And a monastery, is that the same thing?" "'T is a sacred house, full of relics and treasures, where is offered the body of Jesus, the prophet holy, to whom the Jews did shame, and who was wrongfully sentenced to be nailed on the cross, and to suffer death for the sake of men and women; to hell went souls after they had parted from the body, and he took them forth, when he had been bound at the stake, scourged, and crucified, and had worn the crown of thorns. I bid you attend the monastery, to hear masses and matins, and to adore this Lord." "I will go, very gladly, to church and monastery, from this time forth, I promise."

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¶ No more delay; his hunter was saddled, and he took leave that same hour. He was dressed after the custom of Wales; he wore gaiters on his feet, and bore three darts; his mother took two away, for she loved not to see him so much like a Welshman; if she could, she would have taken the third also. In his right hand he held a switch, to urge his horse. His mother, with tears, kissed him, and prayed: "Fair son, God guide you wherever you go, and grant you more joy than remaineth for me!"

¶ After he had ridden a stone's throw, he turned, and saw his mother lying prostrate at the head of the bridge, as if she were dead. With his switch he smote his hunter on the croup, and at full speed the horse bore him into the great gloomy forest; he rode until the decline of day, and slept in the wood till the clear dawn shone.

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The Damsel of the Tent

AT morn, when he had been awakened by the singing of the birds, the youth mounted and rode, until he came in sight of a tent, pitched in a prairie, by the source of a running well; 't was wondrously fair, one side vermilion and the other green, striped with gold; at the top was a gilded eagle, on which smote the rising sun, clear and red, so that the field was lit by the brightness; in a circle about were booths of green boughs. The youth approached, and cried: "Ha! God, here is your house! I should do wrong if I did not visit you; my mother, whose words are sooth, told me that a monastery was the fairest of things, and when I found one, bade me resort thither, to adore the Creator in whom I believe. I will go pray Him send me food, whereof I have great need!"

¶ He rode into the open tent; within, on a bed covered with a rich cloth, slept a damsel, alone, for her maidens, according to their custom, had issued to gather flowers, that they might dress her lodge. When the youth entered, his horse whinnied, so loud that the girl awoke, trembling; in his simplicity, he greeted her, saying: "Damsel, I salute you; for my mother bade me greet maids wherever I should

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encounter them." The maiden, who thought him witless, quivered with fear, and blamed her folly that she had been discovered alone. "Varlet," she cried, "fly, lest my friend perceive thee!" "By my head! first I will kiss you, for so my mother told me." "Indeed, I will not kiss you! Begone! if my friend findeth thee, thou diest." The youth, who had strong arms, embraced her rudely, for he knew no other way, and kissed her in her own despite a score of times. On her finger he marked a stone, a clear emerald, and said: "Beside, my mother charged me to take your ring, but hurt you no further; here, the ring, I want it." "Indeed, you shall not have my ring, unless you tear it from my hand!" He snatched the jewel, put it on his own finger, and said: "Girl, farewell; I like your kiss better than that of my mother's women, for your lips are sweet." She wept and cried: "Varlet, do not rob me of my ring! It will make me wretched, and cost thy own life, sooner or later, I assure thee."

¶ The youth took to heart nothing that she said; he was dying with hunger, because of his long fast; in the corner of the tent he found a flask of wine, with a silver cup beside, and on a heap of rushes a white towel; this he lifted, and underneath found three cold pas-

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ties of venison. With relish he ate one, and poured the good wine into the silver cup, quaffing it in great draughts; then he took another, and said: "Maiden, I shall not need all this pasty; eat it, for they are good; a whole one will be left." She answered not a word; after he had consumed as much as he wished, he covered the remnant, and took leave, saying: "Fair, God save you! Be not disturbed, that I take your ring; I will make it up to you before I die; with your leave I will depart." The damsel wept, and cried that she would not commend him to God, since for his sake needs must she undergo such grief that never wretch brooked more; her life long she would not accept his succor, and let him know, that he had betrayed her.

℄ The girl remained in tears; and it was not long before her friend returned from the forest. When he saw the hoof-marks, and found the maid weeping, he was troubled, and said: "Maiden, by these signs I see that a knight hath been here." "No, sir, I assure you 't was a Welsh varlet, churlish and tiresome, who drank your wine, as it pleased him, and devoured one of your pasties." "Fair, cry you for that? Had he eaten the whole, I care not." "Sir, he took my ring; I would rather have died than have had it stolen." "Faith,

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't was outrage! yet since he hath taken it, let him keep it; but I think there is more behind; if so, conceal it not." "Sir, he kissed me." "Kissed you!" "Yes, sir, in spite of myself." "Then you liked him, and let him," returned the other, who was vexed by jealousy. "Do you think I know you not? 'T is an ill road on which you have entered; you shall follow me over the plain, in such wise that your horse shall not taste oats, nor be groomed, till I am avenged; if he cast a shoe, it shall not be shod; the garment you wear you must not change, but follow me barefoot till I have taken his head. This purpose I will not alter." Thus speaking, he sat down and ate.

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The Red Arms

THE youth proceeded, until he overtook a coal-burner, who was driving an ass. "Peasant," he said, "you who drive the ass, tell me the nearest road to Carlisle; I wish to find King Arthur, who maketh knights, so they say." "Fair friend, take yonder track, which will lead you to a castle on the sea, where you will find the king, both glad and sorry." "How can that be?" "I will tell you in few words; King Arthur hath fought with King Ritho, and defeated the king of the isles; for this reason is he pleased; and he is troubled, because of his companions, who have left his castle, and how they fare he knoweth not; hence cometh his gloom."

¶ The varlet cared not a penny for the words, but followed the path, until on the seacoast he came in sight of a fair castle. From the gate he saw issue a knight, who in his right hand held a cup of gold, while in his left he carried a bridle, lance, and shield; his arms, pure red, became him well. When the youth saw the beautiful arms, fresh and new, he shed tears, and cried: "By my faith, these are the arms I will ask of the king; fie on the man who would demand others!" He made haste, for the time seemed long until he could arrive

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at court; but the knight detained him, and asked: "Varlet, prithee, whither away?" "I go," he answered, "to the king's court, to ask him for your arms." "Varlet, 't is well; go, and return quickly; tell the bad king, if he will not hold his land of me, to yield it, or send one to defend it, for I affirm, 't is mine; he shall credit thee by this token, that from his table have I snatched the cup I bear." The youth paid no heed, but entered; the hall, which was paved with marble, was on the level of the ground, so that he rode in. King Arthur sat at the head of a table, pensive; the knights ate, conversing one with another, save the king, who remained mute. The youth knew not whom to greet, until he met a servant, who held a knife. "Varlet," he said, "you who bear the knife, show me the king." The other, who was courteous, responded: "Friend, yonder he is." The youth went up and made his salutation, as well as he knew how, while the king mused, and gave no reply; he spoke a second time, but the king was still silent.

℄ "By my faith," cried the varlet, "this king never made a knight. How should a king who cannot talk make knights!" With that, he turned his horse, so rudely that he brushed the king's bonnet from his head. The king

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looked up, and cried: "Fair brother, welcome! Do not take it ill, that I did not hear your greeting; I could not speak, being wroth on account of my worst foe, who claimeth my land; his name is the Red Knight of the Forest of Kinkerloi. The queen sat opposite, having come to comfort these knights, who are wounded, as you see; whatever the knight had said, I should not have been vexed; but he snatched away my cup so roughly that on the queen he spilled the wine. It was a churlish deed; it hath caused her to retire to her chamber, where she suffereth so much, that scarce I believe she can escape with life." The varlet paid no heed, but cried: "Sir king, make me a knight, for I am in haste to be gone." Clear and laughing were the eyes of the wild youth; none judged him discreet, but all who beheld him esteemed him fair and gently born.

℄ "Friend," said the king, "alight, and give your hunter to this varlet, who will take it, and perform your pleasure; I have vowed to God, that I will do as you desire, to your honor and my gain." The youth replied: "The man had not dismounted, whom I met on yonder field, and you would have me dismount! By my head, I will not; make me a knight, and I will go!" "Ha, fair dear friend, I will gladly do it, by the faith I owe

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my Maker." "Fair sir king, a knight I will not be, unless a red knight; give me the arms of the man I found at your gate, the same who took away your cup of gold." The seneschal, who was peevish, because he had been hurt, exclaimed: "Friend, you are right; go after the arms, they are yours; you were silly, when you came to look for them here." "Kay," cried the king, "in God's name, forbear! You love to rail against whom you reck not, and are insolent to worthies. If the youth is simple, he is, I hope, a good gentleman; if he hath been put to some mean trade, he may still become wise and brave. 'T is churlish to mock at others, and promise what one cannot perform; a wise man ought not to pledge a thing he is unable to bestow; in so doing, he earneth the dislike of the man who before wished him well, but who expecteth the gift after he hath received the assurance; better quarrel like a man than trifle like a woman; such an one mocketh himself, and stealeth the heart of his friend."

℄ So said the king to Kay; as the varlet was parting, he met a fair maid, whom he saluted, and she him; she smiled, and said: "Youth, art thou gently born, I feel in my heart that in the world will not be two knights better than thou; so I think and believe." Incensed,

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Kay leapt up, and with his open palm struck her on the cheek, so hard that he smote her to the earth. As he returned, Kay passed a fool, who stood beside the chimney; with his foot he thrust him into the fire, because the want-wit had been wont to say: "This damsel will never laugh until she shall set eyes on the man who shall possess the lordship of chivalry." The girl cried and the idiot shrieked, while the varlet did not loiter, but parted in quest of the Red Knight.

℄ Yonet, the squire of Gawain, who loved to carry news, stole out, and by a postern went to the spot where the knight tarried; while he was waiting, he had set down the golden cup on a block of gray stone. As soon as the youth came within hail, he shouted: "Lay down your arms, you must bear them no longer; King Arthur needeth them." The knight inquired: "Youth, is any man coming, to maintain the king's cause? If so, tell me." "How, sir knight, do you mock me, that you have not yet laid aside my arms? Remove them, I command you." "Varlet, I ask thee, if any be coming on the king's part, to do battle." "Sir knight, take off the arms, or I shall strip them away; I will strike you, if you force me to speak again!" The knight waxed wroth; with both hands, he lifted his lance,

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and crossed the youth's shoulders, so hard that he beat him down to the neck of his horse. When he felt the blow, the varlet was wild with rage; he aimed his dart as straight as he could, and let it fly, so swiftly that the knight did not see it come, but through the eye the point pierced the brain, and red blood flowed behind the hood. The knight's heart felt the pang, and he fell.

℄ The varlet dismounted, set aside the lance, and detached the shield; but pull all he might, he could not remove the helmet, nor ungird the sword. Yonet laughed, and cried: "Friend, what are you doing?" "I know not; I thought your king had given me these arms; I would burn them out, sooner than lose them; they stick so, that the man seemeth all of a piece, outside and in." "I will help thee, if thou wilt." "Be quick then, and give them without delay." Yonet unshod the boots, stripped off the hauberk, and removed the helm; but say what he could, the varlet would not be persuaded to doff his coat, or lay aside his gaiters. "Is it a jest, that you would have me change the stout clothes, that my mother made, for the dress of this knight? My canvas shirt, and coat that keeps out the rain, for thin silk that will not bear a drop? Fie on the man who would barter good garments for

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bad!" 'T is hard to instruct simplicity; the lad would not be persuaded.

¶ Yonet put on the hauberk, and set the helm over the cap; he placed the youth's foot in the stirrup and caused him to mount; spurs had he never seen, but used switch and whip. Yonet handed the shield, and offered the lance; before parting, the varlet said: "Friend, if you will, take my hunter; 't is a good one, and I give it you, for I shall need it no longer. Carry to the king his cup of gold; salute him on my part, and declare to the maid whom Kay smote, that if I can, before I die, I will so deal with him, that she shall consider herself avenged." Yonet replied, that he would take the cup and the message, as a wise man should. With that, they took leave of one another, and each went his own way.

¶ Yonet returned to the hall, and cried to the king: "Sir, be merry, for your knight returneth your golden cup." "Of what knight speakest thou?" asked the king, still in his mood. "In God's name, sir, of the varlet who parted but now." "Dost thou mean the Welsh youth, who asked me for the rose-colored arms of the knight who vexed me as much as was in his power?" "Sir, of the same." "And my cup, did the knight love him so much, that he rendered it of free will?" "Nay, sir, rather,

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he sold it so dear, that the varlet slew him." "How was that, fair friend?" "Sir, I only know, that the knight struck him with his lance, angering him greatly; and the varlet repaid the blow, shooting with a dart, so that the knight fell dead." The king exclaimed: "Ha, Kay, evil have you done! Your envious tongue hath robbed me of a knight who might have served me well." "Sir," said Yonet, "he sendeth word to the maid, whom Kay buffeted, that he will avenge her when he can." The fool by the fire heard and danced for glee. "Sir king, now begin your adventures, which oft shall be stern; Kay shall pay dearly for the fault of his foot and hand and wicked tongue; ere forty days, the knight shall avenge myself and the girl; between wrist and elbow, shattered shall be Kay's right arm, so that it shall hang from his neck half a year; from this doom he cannot escape, any more than from death." So incensed was Kay, that almost had he beaten to death the fool; but out of respect for the king, he let it pass. King Arthur cried: "Kay, how hast thou vexed me! It would have been the part of a good knight to have trained the varlet, and taught him to defend himself with sword and shield; now he knoweth not so much of arms as to draw his sword. As he sitteth on his

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steed, he will meet some vassal, who will maim him to get his armor; he will not be able to protect himself, so simple he is." The king made sad cheer, but it could not be bettered, and he let it be.

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WITHOUT a pause, the varlet sped through the forest, till he came out on open ground, by a river so wide, that a cross-bow would scarce carry over, although it flowed in the channel; over the prairie he rode to the edge of the great noisy water, but did not plunge in, for it was deep and black, swifter than the Loire; accordingly, he rode down the bank, opposite a cliff, whose base was washed by the stream; where the cape sloped to the sea, stood a great castle at the entrance of a bay. The varlet turned to the left, and in front saw towers, which he took to be part of the rock. In the centre rose a keep, huge and strong; toward the bay, where the river strove with the tide, stood a barbican, washed by the flood; on the open side rose four low turrets of hewn stone. The stream was crossed by a bridge of stone arches, battlemented; in the middle was a tower, with a draw, made to be a passage in the daytime and a gate by night. On the bridge paced a lord, who turned to meet the stranger; in his hand he carried a staff, and was followed by two youths, bareheaded and curly-haired.

℄ The varlet, who recollected the lessons of his mother, saluted the lord, saying: "Sir, my

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mother taught me so to do." "God bless you, fair brother!" returned the master of the castle, who perceived the simplicity of his guest: "Fair friend, whence come you?" "From the court of King Arthur; the king, God send him fortune! hath made me a new knight!" "A knight? So God save me, I thought, at this moment, the king had more to do than to make knights! Tell me, brother debonair, thine arms, who gave them?" "The king bestowed them on me." "How so?" The youth recited the tale, such as hath been narrated; to tell over would be tedious, for no story improveth by repetition. The lord demanded what he did with his horse. "I course him up and down, like the hunter that I owned in my mother's house." "And your arms, fair brother, what make you of them?" "I know how to don them and doff them, as the varlet showed me, who in my presence stripped the knight I had slain; I bear them so easily, that they plague me not." "By God's soul! 't is well; if it be no trouble, tell me, what errand brought you hither?" "Sir, my mother charged me, that I should accost worthies, wherever I met them, and trust what they should say to me, for great is the gain of those who so do." "Fair brother, blessed be your mother, for her lessons were good. Have

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you no more to say?" "Aye, to beg that you would lodge me to-night." "With pleasure; but first must you promise a boon, whereby you may profit much." "What is that?" "That you will follow the counsel of your mother, and my own." "In faith, I promise." The youth alighted; of the two varlets, one took the steed, and the other the arms; he remained in his gaiters, and the mean coat, that his mother had made.

℄ The lord caused himself to be shod with the sharp steel spurs, that the varlet had brought, and mounted the horse, taking shield and lance, and saying: "Friend, receive a lesson in arms, and note how the lance is to be held, and the horse urged and checked!" With that, he displayed the banner, showing how to grasp the shield; he inclined it a little forward, so that it touched the neck of the charger; then he feutred the lance, and spurred the steed, worth a hundred marks, for none was more spirited. The nobleman understood the use of steed and lance, which from childhood he had learned, while the varlet was pleased with all he saw him do.

℄ After he had finished his tilt, in the view of the fair youth, the nobleman returned with lance raised, and asked: "Fair friend, do you think that you can hold the lance, carry the

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shield, and make the horse gallop and wheel?" The varlet replied, that otherwise, he would not wish to live a day, or ever enjoy land of his own. "What one knoweth not, fair friend, one may learn; to all trades belong heart, pains, and habit; by these three, everything may be acquired. What you yourself have not done, nor seen another perform, 't is no disgrace not to comprehend." With these words, the lord made him mount; and the youth began to carry lance and shield, as if his days had been spent in quest of strife and adventure; for it came to him naturally; and when Nature teacheth, and the heart is set on a thing, nothing cometh hard. By the aid of these, he did so well that the lord was pleased, and said, that if his time had been spent in arms, he would have made an apt pupil. After he had ridden his course, he returned, lance erect, as he had seen his teacher do. "Sir, did I do it well? Do you think I could learn it, if I tried? I never saw anything I was so anxious to understand; I wish I could do it as well as yourself." "You will learn it, fair friend, if you wish; you will have no trouble." Three times the lord mounted, and thrice gave lessons, until the instruction was sufficient; thrice he made the youth mount, and the third time said: "Friend, if you met a

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knight, and he struck you, what would you do?" "Strike back!" "And if your lance broke, how then?" "I would run at him with my fists!" "Friend, that you must not do." "What then?" "You must fence with him, and attack him with the sword." On that, he planted the lance in the earth, for he desired to teach his pupil so much of arms, that if any man assailed him, he could defend himself, and make assault with the sword, when the time came, saying: "Friend, in this manner you should guard yourself, if you are assailed." "Hereof, so God save me, none knoweth more than myself; I have done it many a time, in my mother's house, fighting with cowboys, till I was tired." "Then, let us repair to our hostel; whosoever it vexeth, to-night you shall be nobly lodged."

¶ They went on, side by side, while the varlet said to his host: "Sir, my mother taught me, that I should never accompany any man a long time, without asking his name; if she charged me rightly, fain would I know yours." "Fair friend," answered the lord, "my name is Gonemans of Gelbort." Hand in hand they mounted the stair of the hall; a varlet ran up, of his own accord, and draped the youth in a short mantle, that after exercise he might not take cold. The host had a noble house and

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fair children, and the meal was well served; the lord of the castle placed his guest at his side, and they ate out of the same dish.

¶ After they had risen, the nobleman, who was courteous, begged the varlet to remain a month, or a year if he pleased, for he would retain him, and teach him things that he would find of service. The youth responded: "Sir, I know not if near be the manor where liveth my mother; but I pray God to guide me, so that I may again behold her face; I wot not if alive or dead she be; I am sure 't was out of sorrow that she swooned, when I quitted her; therefore can I not tarry, until I know her estate, but must part at morn." The host held his peace, for he saw words would be useless; they retired to rest, for the beds had been made.

¶ Early on the morrow, the nobleman rose, and went to the bed of the varlet, whom he found still asleep; as a present, he brought him clothing, a shirt and silken breeches, with purple boots, and a coat of cloth woven in Inde. "Friend," he said, "if you trust me, don these garments." "Fair sir, your words might be fairer; the clothes my mother made, are they not better than these? Yet you would have me change!" "Nay, varlet, by the faith I owe my head, they are not so good.

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When I conducted you hither, you promised to do all I advised." "And so I shall; I will oppose you in naught." He hesitated no longer, but put on the raiment, abandoning that which his mother had given. The lord stooped, and shod on the right spur; for in those days it was customary, that whoever made a knight, should put on his spur. Of the varlets who were present, each had a hand in the arming; the lord of the castle took the sword, girt it, and kissed the youth, saying that he had bestowed upon him the most holy order of chivalry, which ought to be free from meanness; and he said: —

℄ "Fair brother, if you do battle with any knight, recollect my entreaty; if you come by the upper hand, so that he shall not be able to make further defence, but is obliged to put himself at your mercy, beware lest you slay him. Have a care that you be not talkative and a newsmonger; none is free of speech who doth not oft utter things that cause him to be taken for rude; the sage saith, who chattereth, sinneth. For this cause, fair brother, I warn you not to speak overmuch; and I implore you, if you find man or woman, dame or damsel, who hath none to advise her, counsel such, if you have knowledge and ability. One thing further I recommend, which you

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must not disdain; go blithely to the monastery, and beseech Him who created the world, that He have mercy on your soul, and in this terrestrial life preserve you his Christian."

¶ The varlet replied: "Be blessed, fair sir, by all the Apostles of Rome, for thus have I heard my mother speak." "Say not again, fair brother, that your mother taught you this or that; hitherto I blame you not for using such language; but henceforth, prithee amend it; if you continued to say so, it would be taken as folly." "What shall I say then?" "You may say, that the vavassour who shod on your spur so taught and commanded you." The youth declared, that so long as he lived, he would mention naught, save as coming from his teacher, for he wist that his lessons were good. The vavassour girt on the youth's belt, held up his hand, and said: "Fair brother, God save you! Go with God who guideth you, for it vexeth you here to tarry."

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TO the new knight the time seemed long until he could come to the manor of his mother, and find her safe and well. He took to the woods, for he was more at home in the forest than in the open country, and rode until he came in sight of a strong castle; without the walls everything was waste, naught in view but river and sea. Before he could arrive, he must needs cross a bridge, so feeble that scarce could it bear his weight. He passed safely, and found the gate closed; he knocked and cried, until at an upper window appeared a pale damsel, and asked: "Who is it calls?" "Fair maid," he answered, "a knight requests you this eve to grant him a lodging." "Sir, you will owe us little thanks; yet we will lodge you as well as we can." With these words, she disappeared, and he, who feared to be kept waiting, resumed his knocking; presently came four servants, armed with swords and axes, who opened, and said: "Friend, enter." The men seemed handsome, but worn out by fasting and watching; if the country was desert, the town was no better; the streets were desolate and the houses in ruins; in the two abbeys, monks and nuns were anxious and alarmed; the walls

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of the monastery were broken, and the towers roofless; the gates of the castle stood open night and day; no mill ground or oven baked; there was nothing to be bought, not a penny-worth of bread or wine.

¶ The servants led him to a hall, roofed with tiles, where they dismounted and disarmed him; a varlet descended the stair, and draped him in a gray mantle, while others put up his horse, where the steed got neither hay nor oats. At the steps of the hall, two lords met him, who were grizzled, but not old; they would have been in the flower of their strength, had it not been for the hardships they had endured. With them came a maid, brighter than any falcon; her gown and mantle were of dark cloth, starred with gold, and lined with ermine, the collar bordered with sables. Here, if ever, had God made beauty in shape of woman; coifless she was, and showed hair that might have been taken for fine gold; her white forehead, broad at the brows, seemed marble or ivory from carver's hand; her brows were wide apart, her eyes were laughing-clear, her nose straight, and on her countenance lay red on white, like rose laid upon silver, to steal the thought of mankind. When she beheld the guest, she saluted him, as did the knights about, and he herself; she took his hand, and

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said: "Fair brother, our hostel is not such as befitteth an honorable man; if I recited our state, such as it is, you would think I did so in order to send you away; yet, if it pleaseth you, enter! accept our lodging, and God grant you better on the morn!"

¶ So speaking, she conducted him to a chamber, fair and wide; the two seated themselves, side by side, on a bed covered with a silken cloth; knights entered by fours and fives, and remained silent, while they gazed at the varlet, who did not open his lips, for he remembered the warning of his teacher, not to speak too freely. Among themselves, the knights remarked: "I wonder if this youth be dumb? 'T would be a pity; as he sitteth by our lady, and she by him, it seemeth as if God had made them for one another." The damsel waited, expecting her guest to begin; but she perceived that he would never open his lips unless she spoke first; accordingly, she said, debonairly: "To-day whence come you?" "Damsel, from the house of a nobleman, who entertained me well; I can describe his castle, but not name it; it hath five towers, one large and four small; I only know, that he himself is called Gonemans of Gelbort." "Fair friend, you have said well; it was courteous of you to call him a nobleman; noble he is, I can affirm;

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know that I am his niece; 't is certain, since you quitted him, you have met none nobler; he made you a merry hostel, as he could, being mighty and rich; but here have we naught, save a few crumbs that an uncle, a holy man, hath sent for supper, and a flask of wine, beside a buck, that one of my servants slew with an arrow." She bade the tables be spread; these were brought, and the folk took their seats, and lingered not long, but ate with relish. After the meal, some took repose, who had waked the night before, and others went to keep watch. They took pains to provide for the guest; the servant who cared for the bedding, spread white sheets, and put a pillow at the head of the youth, who soon fell asleep, for his heart was free from care.

¶ On her part, the maid tossed and turned, at a loss what to do; at last she rose and donned a silken mantle, for she was minded to visit the guest, and tell something of her trouble. She issued from her chamber, and came to the bed where he lay, weeping in such wise that the tears fell on his face. The guest waked, wondering to find his cheek wet, and saw her kneeling beside; in courtesy, he drew her toward him, and asked: "Fair, what is your will? Why have you come hither?" "Ha, gentle knight, mercy! For the sake of God

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and his Son, think me not vile, that hither have I resorted; no creature is so sad, that my misery is not more; I shall live to see no future night nor day after to-morrow; I will rather kill myself with my own hand. Of three hundred knights, wherewith this castle was furnished, not a third survive; a cruel knight, the seneschal of Clamadius, King of the Isles, hath slain and imprisoned them; I am as sorry for the captives as if they were slain, for I know they will never escape; for my sake brave men have perished, therefore I have a right to be wretched. A winter and a summer hath Enguigneron besieged us; his force groweth, while ours diminisheth, and our victual wasteth, so that 't is wholly spent; to-morrow, unless God prevent, the castle will be rendered, and myself with it; but possess me Clamadius shall not, save void of life and breath; in my casket I keep a knife of sharp steel, that I will plunge in my body. My speech disturbeth you; I leave you to your rest." The youth responded: "Fair friend, make better cheer; comfort yourself, weep no longer, but wipe the tears from your eyes; God, if He pleaseth, will deal with you better than you have foretold."

℄ At daybreak, the damsel returned to her room; without the aid of her women, she robed herself, awakening none. The watch-

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men aroused the sleepers, who rose without delay. At the same hour the maiden repaired to her knight, and courteously said: "Sir, may God give you good day; you will go, and I shall not be sorry, for it would not be kind; we have done you little honor; I beseech God that He may provide you with a better hostel, where may you find more bread and salt and wine." "Fair, not to-day shall I seek other lodging; rather shall you possess all your land in peace, if yonder I find your enemy; if I conquer him, as a guerdon I demand your love; other wage will I not accept." She answered covertly: "Sir, 't is a poor thing you have chosen, yet, if I refused it, you would call me proud; therefore I will not deny you. Howbeit, do not say that I become your friend on these terms, that you are to die for my sake; neither your age nor strength are such as make you fit to cope with yonder knight." "That shall be seen when we come to the battle; I will not give it up, whatever be said." He called for his arms, and they were brought; in the public place, they mounted him on a horse well equipped, while men and women exclaimed: "Sir, on this day may God aid you, and destroy Enguigneron the seneschal, who hath ruined this country!" As he passed the gate, they cried: "Fair sir,

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may the true cross, on which God suffered
his Son to pine, keep you from mortal
peril, and restore you in safety to the
place where you desire to be!"

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Enguigneron

MEANTIME, the besiegers espied the varlet, and pointed him out to the seneschal, who was sitting in front of his tent, in belief that the castle would be surrendered before night fell. Enguigneron paced up, on a strong charger; his people were merry, for they thought that they had taken the fortress, and conquered the land. "Varlet," he cried, "who sendeth thee? Comest thou to seek peace and victual?" "Thyself," returned the youth, "what dost thou in this country? Why hast thou killed these knights, and wasted the region?" The seneschal answered haughtily: "The castle must be yielded, for it hath held out too long; and my lord shall have the damsel." "Fie on the lips! rather, thou must abandon thy claim." "Dost thou cozen me? By the Holy Father! many a man payeth the score who never committed the fault!" In ire he feutred his lance; the knights spurred, as fast as their steeds could carry them; Enguigneron was unhorsed, hurt in the arm and side. The varlet dismounted, for he knew not how to make assault from the saddle; he drew his sword, and attacked his foe. The battle continued, with fierce strokes, until the seneschal was overthrown, and implored

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mercy; the varlet replied, that none should he have. Yet he remembered the words of the nobleman, who had commanded him never to slay a knight after he had gained the upper hand. Enguigneron cried: "Fair, sweet friend, be not so cruel as to refuse me mercy; I assure thee, thine will be the gain; no man or woman who had seen us would believe that in single combat thou couldst slay me; if I bear witness, in sight of my people, and in front of my tent, that thou hast overcome me in arms, my word will be credited, and thine honor so great, that no knight will have more. Consider if thou hast not some lord who hath rendered thee a service, which thou desirest to repay; send me thither, and on thy part will I declare that thou hast vanquished me, and will make myself his prisoner, to suffer what he pleaseth."

℄ "Fie," exclaimed the varlet, "on him who asketh more! Knowest thou whither thou shalt go? To yonder castle, and declare to the fair one who is my friend, that thou wilt offend her no further, but put thyself at her mercy." The seneschal replied: "Kill me rather, for she will kill me, since there is nothing she wisheth so much as my shame; I was at the slaying of her father, and in this war have taken and maimed her knights; a

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hard prison would be mine; hast thou any other friend who hath no desire to hurt me, send me thither; if she had power over me, she would take my life." On that, the youth bade him go to a castle, which he described, water and bridge, towers and wall, until Enguigneron perceived that he would be sent to a place where he was worst hated. "I cannot be saved, fair brother, if I repair to the lord of that castle; in this very war have I killed one of his brothers; slay me sooner, for it will prove my ruin." "Then proceed to the prison of King Arthur; on my part greet his knights, and beg them to show thee the damsel whom Kay buffeted, because on me she smiled; yield thyself her prisoner, and tell her that God will not let me die until she is avenged." The seneschal returned, that this he would faithfully perform; accordingly, the varlet went back to the castle, and the seneschal set out to his prison; he caused his banner to be borne away, and made his host quit the siege; they struck the tents and departed, leaving neither blond nor brown.

¶ The folk of the castle came forth to meet their knight; they were vexed, and cried: "Enguigneron, why not take his head, since thou didst not send him here?" He answered: "Masters, methinks I should not have done

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well; he hath slain your kindred; if he had no guaranty, you would have killed him; there would have been little good in me, if I had not had mercy when I was stronger; if he keepeth word, he will go to the prison of King Arthur." Meantime arrived the damsel, who made much of him, and led him to her chamber for ease and rest; in place of eating and drinking, there were kisses and embraces, with words debonair.

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Clamadius

SIR CLAMADIUS was riding toward the castle in great pride, for he looked that it should be rendered on that same day; as he marched, a varlet galloped to meet him, tearing his hair. "Sir," he shouted, "in God's name, it goes badly!" "How so?" "Sir, by my faith, your seneschal hath been vanquished in arms, and is gone to the prison of King Arthur." "Varlet, who hath done it? Whence could come the man, who hath made recreant so good a knight?" "Sir, I know no more, than that he rode out of Beaurepaire, armed with red arms." "Varlet, what do you advise me to do?" "Sir, retreat, for by advancing you will make nothing."

¶ An old knight, who had been the king's tutor, exclaimed: "Varlet, you say ill; he must take wiser counsel; I bid him proceed." He said to the king: "Sir, do you know how the castle may be taken? In Beaurepaire the knights are weak, for they have neither food nor drink, while we are hale and strong. Send twenty knights to skirmish at the gate; the knight who pleaseth himself with his fair friend Blancheflour will not endure it, and will ride forth to joust; he will be taken or slain, while the rest are so feeble, that they will be

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of little service. Let the twenty fall back, until they draw them on to yonder valley, where we will lay an ambush, and take them unawares." The king answered: "I approve it; we have four hundred knights and a thousand servants; we will take them like dead folk."

¶ The twenty knights advanced to the castle, with banners displayed; when the folk of the castle perceived, they opened the gate, and the varlet issued, like a bold knight, to encounter the foes. Those whom he met took him to be no apprentice in arms; some he slew and some he maimed, one he unhorsed and another he captured, bestowing the horses on such as needed. So it went on, until of the main army four hundred servants had mounted the hill; the people of the fortress kept close to the gate, and fell back in order, while the others followed in disarray; on the gate were posted archers, who shot into the throng. The garrison were few, and their enemies were reinforced, so that they withdrew from the castle, while the besiegers rushed after, and forced their way in; the defenders flung a portcullis on their heads, killing and maiming many; assault was lost pains, for it was impossible to enter. The aged knight who had counselled the assault said

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to the king: "Sir, 't is natural that a brave man should suffer mishap; good and evil succeed, as God pleaseth; the sum is, that you have lost the day. Yet hath every saint his feast; this time on you hath fallen the brunt, but their turn will come; I will forfeit mine eyes, if they hold out two days; after to-morrow, yours will be the castle, and she who now refuseth you will entreat you, in God's name, to take her to wife." With that, those who had tents pitched them, and the rest encamped as well as they could. The people of the castle disarmed their prisoners, but did not confine or chain them, only obliging them to swear that they would do no harm, and keep loyal prison.

¶ On the same day, by providence of God, was driven into harbor a barge that had been tempest-tossed; the burghers sent to inquire who the mariners were, and what was their errand. The latter replied: "We are merchants, who have victual to sell, and cattle and pigs to kill, if need be." The burghers blessed the gale, and declared to the sailors that all was sold, as dear as they could wish, and that they would not be able to count the plates of gold and silver that would be paid for the wine and the flesh; the bargain was made, and they set out unloading. When the citizens

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saw the provision, their joy was great; the cooks made themselves busy, and the scullions lighted the fires. The hall echoed with gaiety; the cooks toiled until the hungry were seated, and when the meal was over, these rose from table.

¶ When the army heard the news, they declared that there was no hope of starving out the town; the king, in his anger, took no advice, but sent a messenger to assure the Red Knight, that on the morrow he would be found on the field, to do battle, if the knight dared meet him. When the maiden heard she was grieved; but her friend answered, that the king should have the combat he desired. The burghers implored him not to encounter a man whom none had yet subdued. "Hush, sirs," he answered, "I would not abandon it for all the world." During the night, his friend besought the varlet to remain at peace, and not mind the king; but her words were idle, although she kissed him so sweetly, that at every breath she set the key of love in the lock of the heart. The youth demanded his arms, and they were fetched, while men and women wept and lamented; he commended them to the King of kings, and mounted the charger of Norway, which had been saddled for his sake.

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¶ The meadow was open and wide, while in the middle were only the two knights, for the king had bidden his folk withdraw. They set their lances before their saddle-bows, and galloped without a word; each had a sharp glaive and a rough lance; they smote each other in such fashion that their shields broke and their lances flew; both knights went down, but leapt up with haste, and drew their swords; they fought a long time, with mighty blows, but the end was, that Clamadius was forced to sue for mercy, and make the same vow that his seneschal had done. He would not consent to proceed to Beaurepaire, nor to the castle of Gonemans, but agreed that on the morrow he would release the prisoners in his towers, and never again disturb the peace of the land.

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Separation

THE king kept his word. Without delay he repaired to his country, and when he arrived, bade his captives be released; his command was obeyed, and they departed, taking their arms. At this time, as is written, it was customary that a knight should repair to his prison, wearing the same armor which he had worn in the fray, neither adding nor removing aught; in this guise, Clamadius journeyed to Dinaderon in Wales, where King Arthur was then holding court.

¶ When the prisoners returned to Beaurepaire, there was delight in the castle; knights made merry in hall, and the church-bells rang for joy; monks and nuns made procession and thanked God, while men and women trooped through the streets, dancing and singing ballads.

¶ Clamadius went his way, by the same road which his seneschal had taken; for three nights, he slept where on the previous night Enguigneron had reposed, following his hoof-marks. At length he arrived at Dinaderon, where King Arthur held a crowded court; on the evening before, the seneschal had told his story, and been retained as one of the household. When he saw his master approach, he

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recognized him, and exclaimed: "Sirs, wonderful! the knight with red arms hath sent hither the knight you see; he hath conquered him, I am sure, for he is covered with blood; I know him, for he is my master, and I his man; his name is Clamadius of the Isles; I thought that in the empire of Rome was no better knight; but mischance oft befalleth the worthy." With that, the two ran toward one another, and met in the courtyard.

¶ It was on Whitsuntide; by King Arthur, on a dais, sat Queen Guinevere, among counts, dukes, and kings, queens, countesses, and damsels. After mass, ladies and knights had returned from the monastery; through the hall marched Kay, unmantled, with staff of office in right hand, and bonnet on head, his blond hair bound in a tress; in the world was no better knight, save for his sharp tongue; his coat was of tinted silk, and his glittering belt showed buckle and clasp of gold. As he passed, all stood from his path, for a wise man feareth a wicked tongue, be the words jest or earnest. He spoke to none, but stood before the king, and said: "Sir, if you chose, your meal would be ready." "Kay," cried the king, "let me be! At so great a feast, while my court is so crowded, I will not take meat until tidings arrive."

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℄ As he spoke, Clamadius entered, in arms, as was proper, and said: "God save and bless the best of kings, the most liberal and gentle, by testimony of men and women who have beheld his prowess and nobility! Fair sir, listen to the message I am charged to deliver. It grieveth me to confess, that I have been vanquished by a knight; on his part, I am obliged to render myself to you; I may not do otherwise; if you ask whether I know his name, I must answer, no; so much only can I say, that his arms are red, and he saith, you gave them." "Friend," responded the king, "in God's name, is he lord of himself, safe and well?" "Aye, sir, as much so as the best of knights; he biddeth me accost the maid who smiled on him, wherefore Kay dealt her a blow, which he saith he will avenge, if God grant him power." ℄ When he heard, the fool leapt up and cried: "Sir king, so bless me God, well shall the buffet be repaid, for Kay's arm shall be broken, and his collar-bone put out." So furious was the seneschal, that he would have affronted the fool, but for respect to the king, who shook his head, and exclaimed: "Ha, Kay, I am sorry that he is not here; he is lost, by reason of thy silly tongue." With that, the king bade Girflet son of Do, and Sir Ewain take the knight, and lead him to the chamber where

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made merry the damsels of the queen. These conducted him thither, and showed him the girl; Clamadius gave tidings that she was fain to hear, for she was grieved on account of the blow that on her cheek had she received; base is the man who forgetteth an affront he hath brooked; in a stout heart, pain passeth and shame endureth, but in a poor spirit it dieth and groweth cold.

¶ Clamadius had delivered his message, and was retained at court, to make one of the household. Meantime, the youth who had delivered the land and the fair maid Blancheflour had joy by her side; the kingdom would have been his own, had not his thoughts been elsewhere. In his heart he remembered his mother, whom he had seen fall in a swoon; he longed to behold her face, more than aught beside. He took leave of his friend, who refused and protested, and bade her people implore him to remain; but their words were of no avail, albeit so much he promised, that if he found his mother alive, he would bring her back, and return to possess the land, and if she were dead, he would do the like.

¶ When he issued from the city, two processions were made, as if it had been Ascension Day, or Sunday, one of monks and the other of nuns, who cried: "Sir, thou who hast saved

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us from exile, and restored us to our home, 't is no wonder if we weep, being deserted so soon; our sorrow could not be greater." He responded: "Be not disconsolate; if God please, I will return; such grief is of no avail. Do you think it not right, that I should seek my mother, who dwelleth alone in the wood that is named the Waste Forest? Return I must, choose or no, for abandon her will I not; if she liveth, a nun will I make her, veiled in this church, and if dead she be, yearly will I offer a service for her soul; may Jesus and holy Abraham place her among the blessed spirits! Sirs monks, and you, fair dames, ought not to be distressed; I will benefit you for her soul's sake, if God permitteth me to return."

¶ So speaking, the varlet parted, lance in rest, and all day pursued his journey, meeting no Christian soul who could point out the way. All the while, he never ceased to petition God, the sovereign Father, that He would let him come to his mother, and find her sound and well, if such were his will.

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THE varlet went on, until he reached a river, flowing between hills; seeing that it was deep and wide, he dared not enter, but exclaimed: "Ha, Lord God the mighty! If I could pass, methinks I should find my mother, if she be still alive." He rode along the bank, until he came to a place where the stream washed the cliff, so that he could advance no farther. Coming down the current, he saw a skiff, with two men; he halted, for he thought they would float by; but they stopped, and came to anchor; the one who was in the bow angled, baiting his hook with a little fish. The youth, who wist not how to get across, saluted them, and inquired: "Sirs, tell me if over this water there be any bridge?" The fisherman answered: "Nay, by my faith, brother, nor any boat larger than this; for twenty leagues, up and down, on horseback one cannot cross, seeing there is no ford nor ferry." "Then tell me, in God's name, where I may obtain lodging." The fisherman replied: "To-night you will need that, and more; I myself will lodge you. Mount by the cleft in yonder rock; when you are at the top, you will see my house, close to the river, and surrounded by woods."

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¶ The youth ascended and gazed, but could discern only earth and sky. "Did I come to be cheated?" he cried; "Fisherman who told me, disloyal wert thou, if thou didst it out of malice." With that, in a valley he espied the head of a tower, square, built of gray stone, with two turrets, and a gallery in front. Since he had found a hostel, he ceased to blame the fisher; before the gate was a drawbridge, which he found lowered; he was met by four varlets; two disarmed him, the third took his horse, while the fourth draped him in a scarlet mantle, which had never been worn. They led him to a gallery, where he waited until the arrival of two servants, who conducted him before their lord.

¶ They entered a hall as wide as it was long; in the centre, on a bed, lay a nobleman, whose hair was blent with gray; his cap was made of sable, lined with purple cloth, and his robe of the same stuff. He reclined, leaning on his elbow; in front, between four columns of bronze, which supported the chimneys, burned a huge fire; four hundred men could have found room about the hearth. Standing on either side, the servants brought him before the host, who greeted him, saying: "Friend, be not vexed that I rise not to receive you." He answered: "Sir, in God's name, no more;

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be assured, it disturbeth me not." The lord raised himself as well as he could, and said: "Friend, come hither, and seat yourself at my right hand." The varlet obeyed, and his host asked: "Friend, to-day whence come you?" "Sir, this morning I quitted Beaurepaire, so is the castle called." "You have made a long journey; you must have parted before the watchman had blown for day." "Nay, sir, after the bells had rung prime."

¶ As he conversed, entered a varlet, about whose neck hung a sword; he gave it to the master of the house, who partly drew it, and saw where it had been forged, for 't was written on the blade; moreover, he read that it was of good steel, which would not break, save in a single danger, known only to the maker of the weapon. The varlet said: "Sir, your niece sendeth you this sword; never have you seen one easier wielded; bestow it where you will, but my lady will be pleased if it be given to a man who will employ it bravely; its maker hath fashioned but three beside, and sworn never to forge another." Forthwith, the host presented his guest with the brand, which had rich hangings; the pummel was of Arabian gold, and the sheath gold-work of Venice. "Fair brother," he said, "this sword was destined for you; I wish you to possess it; gird it,

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if you mean to wear it." The youth returned thanks, and belted the brand, drawing it and restoring it to the sheath; it became him marvellously well, and he appeared like one who would make good use of it in time of need. Behind, near the fire, he saw the varlet who had charge of the arms, and gave him the sword; after that, he sat down beside his host, who did him great honor.

¶ The hall was lit with many candles; while they spake of this and that, entered a varlet who bore a lance which he held by the middle; he passed between the fire and the bed, so that those who were seated observed the lance, with its shining glaive; from the point flowed a drop of blood, which coursed to the bearer's hand. The stranger saw the marvel, and wondered what it meant; but he bethought himself of the teacher who had cautioned him not to be free of speech; he feared, if he spake, that it would seem rude; therefore he asked no question.

¶ Presently came two fair youths, with candlesticks of chiselled gold, each having ten candles or more. They were accompanied by a damsel, who in both hands carried a grail; as she entered, it emitted such lustre that the candles lost their light, like the stars when riseth the sun or the moon. After her went

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a second maid, bearing a silver tray. The grail was covered with jewels, the richest in the world. Like the bearer of the lance, these also passed in front of the couch, from chamber to chamber; the youth saw and dared not ask whom they served with the grail; yet he feared to mistake, for he remembered to have heard that one may err by keeping silent too long as well as by speaking overmuch; howbeit, he put no question.

¶ When the host bade, were brought water and towels; the master and his guest laved their hands in the warm water; two varlets brought an ivory table, and held it before them, while two others followed, each bearing a trestle of ebony, a wood which doth not change; on the trestles was set the table, which was covered with a cloth as white as any ever used by cardinal or pope. The first course was a haunch of fat venison, seasoned with pepper; clarets were served in golden cups, while a varlet carved the haunch, laying the slices on a silver plate; meantime, the grail again passed before their eyes. The guest wished to know who was the person that was served therewith, but refrained, for the sake of the master, who had warned him against abundance of words; too long he remained mute, for at every course uncovered passed the grail.

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He knew not to whom it was carried, though he longed to learn; he said to himself, that on the morrow, ere he took leave, he would ask one of the varlets of the house. So the matter was deferred, and he gave his mind to the meal; dishes and wines were freely furnished; with all that king or emperor could enjoy they were supplied on that eve.

¶ After meat, the time was spent in conversation, until servants brought herbs and fruits, such as are eaten before bed-time, dates, figs, and gilliflower heads, pomegranates, electuaries, and ginger. Of many liquors they partook, mulberry wine, clarets, and clear sirops; the varlet was amazed, for like splendor had he never seen. The lord of the castle said: "Friend, 't is time to repose; let it not vex you if I go to my room; when it pleaseth you, you shall be bedded here in the hall. I cannot control my person; needs must I be carried hence." Four strong servants issued from a chamber, and by the corners took up the cloth on which he lay. With the guest remained others, who did everything that was needful; when he wished, they unshod and unclad him, and laid him on sheets of white linen. He slept till break of day; when he waked, he saw no man; when he found he must, he rose alone, and drest himself without help, as well

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as he could; he thought of his arms, and found them at the head of the dais, whither they had been borne.

¶ After he had armed himself, he went to the doors of the chambers that in the evening he had seen open; it was to no purpose, for they were barred. He called and knocked, but there was no reply; he turned to the door of the hall, found it open, and descended the stair; his horse he found saddled, while his lance and shield were leaning against the wall. He mounted, and gazed about, but could perceive no servant, varlet, or squire; he rode to the gate of the castle, and found the drawbridge lowered. He thought that the household must have gone to the forest, to hunt stags and roes, and said to himself that he would ride after, to inquire why the lance bled, and whither was carried the grail. He issued from the gate; as he came to the foot of the bridge, he felt his horse's feet rise; the steed made a bound, or both horse and man would have been hurt. He turned and saw that the bridge had been raised. "Ha," he cried, "thou who hast lifted the bridge, come forth, that I may look on thee, and ask a thing that I desire to know." The words were wasted; no reply.

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The Cousin

THE youth found fresh hoof-marks leading to the forest, and said to himself: "Yonder, methinks, went the men I seek." He galloped until the trail disappeared; under an oak-tree he perceived a damsel, who wept and cried: "Alas, wretch that I am! In an unhappy hour was I born! Would that I had perished, and my friend survived! Death that persecutest me, wherefore hast thou taken his soul, to leave mine? Since I have lost the thing I love, I care not for life! Death, accept my spirit, that it may dwell in his company, if Christ pleaseth!"

¶ Thus she lamented over the body of a headless knight, whom she held in her arms; the youth rode up and saluted her, and she returned his greeting, without intermitting her sorrow. "Damsel," he said, "tell me, who hath slain the knight you embrace?" "Fair sir, a knight slew him this very morn; but one thing amazeth me; whence you come, for ten leagues, is no safe hostel; yet your horse hath smooth flanks, as if his bed had been of hay and oats, and you, methinks, have spent a night of ease." "Fair, if so seemeth, 't is right; to cry aloud, one would be heard in the house where I lay. You know not this

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country; I have had the best hostel I ever enjoyed." "Ha, sir, you have slept in the castle of the rich Fisher King." "Damsel, I wot not, if king or fisherman he be; but courteous he is, and rich; and I can tell no more than that yesternight I saw two men who floated down the stream; one who angled showed me his house, and made me his guest."

¶ The maiden answered: "Fair sir, king he is; but in a fray was he maimed, so that he cannot help himself; with a dart was he shot through both haunches, and suffereth so much pain that he cannot sit a horse; when he desireth amusement, he causeth himself to be rowed, and angleth. Therefore is he entitled the Fisher King; this pleasure he chooseth, because he can bear no other; but he hath his hunters and archers, who chase in his forests, wherefore he delighteth to sojourn in this lodge; had he the world at will, methinks he could select no better place." "I wondered, yester eve, when I came into his presence; I stood before him, and he said that I must sit by his side, and not account him proud if he did not rise to receive me." "Certes, he did you great honor; did you see the lance, whereof the point bleedeth?" "By my faith, aye." "And did you inquire why it bled?"

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"So God aid me, no." "Did you see the grail?" "I did." "And its bearer?" "A maid." "Whence came she?" "She carried it from chamber to chamber." "Did the grail go uncovered?" "Aye, and attended by two varlets." "What had they in their hands?" "Candlesticks of many branches." "After the grail, what followed?" "A second maid, holding a salver." "Did you ask whither they were going?" "I never opened my lips." "So help me God, 't is even the worse; fair friend, what name hast thou?"

℄ The youth responded and said, that he was called Perceval the Welshman; he spoke the truth, and knew it not. When the damsel heard, she rose and said, in ire: "Fair friend, changed is thy name to Perceval the Worthless; Perceval, fair sweet friend, unhappy art thou to ask no question; hadst thou inquired, the king who is maimed would have recovered the use of his limbs, and regained his land, that now he will never possess, whence good would have come; now will many a woe befall thyself and others; it hath happened to thee, on account of thy sin toward thy mother, who hath died of grief for thy sake; I know thee better than thou dost me, for thou wottest not who I am; I was nurtured in the house of thy mother, a great while ago; I am as sorry for

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thy failure, in that thou didst not learn what was done with the grail, and to whom it was borne, as I am that thy mother is dead." "What dost thou with this knight?" "I cherish him, because he called me his sweet friend, and loved me as a loyal knight." "Ha, cousin, if you have spoken truth, tell me how you know." "By this token, that I have seen her laid in earth." "Now," cried Perceval, "may God have mercy on her soul! An evil tale have you told me; since she is interred, what have I to seek? I came for naught but only her face to behold; now elsewhere lieth my road. Attend me, if you will; together let us depart; the dead to the dead, the living to the living; to me it seemeth madness that you guard a corpse. Let us pursue the slayer; I promise you that I will make him recreant, or he myself."

℄ The maid, who could not repress the deep sorrow that filled her heart, replied: "Fair friend, naught shall persuade me to go until I have buried my friend. If you will hearken, take yonder road, for by the other path went the cruel knight, who hath slain my fair love. I would not have you follow, albeit I hate him as much as if it were myself he had killed. But whence had you the sword that hangeth on your left side, and hath never drawn blood,

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nor been wielded in fray? I know where it was made, and who forged it; trust it not, for in pieces it will break." "Fair cousin, yester eve, one of the nieces of my host sent it, and I thought myself favored; you dismay me, if your tidings be true. Tell me, if it breaketh, may it be repaired?" "Aye, but with hardship; he who should carry it to the lake, if the spot he could find, might there have it welded. Go to none, save Trebucet, a workman so named; he made it, and will mend it; nor can the work be done by another." "Indeed," cried Perceval, "'t is pity if it break." With that, he parted, and she remained beside the body of the knight for whose sake she was sad.

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The Proud Knight of the Plain

PERCEVAL found the path, and followed it, until he overtook a palfrey that paced in front; the beast was unkempt and starved, like a hired horse, overworked by day and neglected at night; the saddle and lorain corresponded to the creature. On its back rode a lady, who would have been fair had she been in good case; but so wretchedly was she drest, that her gown, not a span entire, was held by coarse stitches, and her skin, like a peasant's, tanned by heat and frost; she had no mantle, and tears ran over her robe. When Perceval approached, she gathered up her gown; as she closed one rent, a hundred opened. He heard her complain: "God, may it not please thee that longer I live! I have suffered too grievously, by no fault of mine. Deliver me, if Thou wilt, and free me from one who disgraceth, and will not kill me! If I pleased him, he ought to forgive me, since I have borne so much; but he liketh me not, since he draggeth me after him, and doth not care." Perceval exclaimed: "Fair, God save you!" She started, and answered in a low voice: "Sir, who hast saluted me, your heart have its desire, though I have small reason thus to speak." Blushing for shame, he an-

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swered: "Fair friend, in God's name, why say you so? I know not that hitherto have I ever seen or harmed you." "Aye, and made me so unhappy that none ought to accost me; I sweat for fear when any man doth so." "Indeed, I wot of no injury that I have done; since I have seen you so bare, my heart will never know joy, unless I learn why it is you suffer." "Ha, sir, mercy! Hush and fly! 'T is sin keepeth you." "Fain would I know why I must avoid, when no man pursueth." "Sir, inquire not, but make what speed you may, that the Proud Knight of the Plain, who wisheth only strife, perceive not our meeting; if any man address me, it grieveth him so much that he taketh his head; 't is but a little while that he slew a knight; but first he maketh him listen to the story."

℄ Meantime, the Proud Knight issued from the wood, and like a thunderbolt rushed through the sand, crying: "Unfortunate wert thou who hast tarried beside the maid; thy end is at hand, because thou hast detained her; yet slay thee I will not, before I relate why I make her live in such distress. I went to the forest, and in my tent left this damsel, whom dearly I loved; by chance, thither came a Welsh youth; I know not how it befell, but he kissed her, perforce, as she averreth; the

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woman who abandoneth her lips surrendereth more; in this quarrel only desireth she to be conquered, and defendeth herself because she feareth to yield what she wisheth to be taken. And it grieveth me that from her finger he stole my ring, ate my pasties, and drank my wine. Now hath my friend her reward; he who doth folly should pay the price, that he relapse not. Angered was I when I returned, and swore that her palfrey should never be shod, nor should she wear any garment other than she had on, until I had mastered the man who constrained her, and had taken his head."

¶ Perceval replied: "Friend, know that she hath fulfilled her penance, for I am he who kissed her, in her own despite, and took her ring, but harmed her no further, save that I ate half the pasties, and of the wine quaffed what I would; therein I bore me like a fool." "By my head, 't is strange that thou hast owned it! Thou art ripe for death, since thou hast made confession." "Death is not so near as thou thinkest."

¶ Without more ado, they spurred, and encountered so furiously, that their lances shivered like dry twigs. In a moment they leapt to feet, and drew their swords, wherewith they dealt mighty blows. At the first onset, broke

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the brand that Perceval had received from his host; the fragment he cast away, and drew his own sword; when he felt it in his hand, he rejoiced, for he put faith in it. The Proud Knight exclaimed: "Vassal, you have a good sword; if it lasteth as long as the first, you will pay dear for the pasties; cheaper could you buy in the market at Camelot; such error did you never commit, as to kiss my friend and plunder her ring." "By my faith, thy threat I scorn! Let each do his worst!" With that, they made assault, dinting helmets and quartering shields. The maid who looked on quivered for fear; when the knight beheld, his blood boiled, and his force was doubled. Perceval was touched by pity for the girl whom he saw weeping for the sake of the friend who had shamed her, because of no fault; he burned to avenge her, and furiously attacked the knight, who returned the blows.

℄ Meanwhile, the Rich Fisher recollected the sword, for he knew it would break in the first encounter; he summoned a boy, whom he saw in his court; the child knelt before him, and he charged him to follow the knight who had slept in the castle, and bring back the pieces, if the brand broke. The boy left the hall, and the bridge was lowered to let him

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pass; he followed the trail, until he found the maid who grieved over her lover, and asked tidings of the knight in red arms; she answered, with sad heart: "Fair brother, he spake with me, and by yonder path departed; methinks he pursueth the knight who hath killed my friend. Tell me, dost thou follow for the sake of the sword, that he received in the house of the good Fisher King?" The lad answered, that he had been sent to gather the fragments; he took leave, and followed the hoof-marks, until in a plain he came up with the knights, and dared not approach, but stood still to watch the battle; he saw the pieces, and stole up, until he laid hand on them, while the knights took no note. He made no pause, but ran back through the wood, until he came to his lord, and knelt down, with the parts of the brand; with joy the king gave them in charge of a servant, and asked the child if he had seen the fray. The boy responded, that he knew not which had the better, for he had made haste to return, and quitted the king.

¶ On the plain, the knights made blood flow, dealing great strokes on their iron helms; they fought until the Proud Knight became recreant and sued for mercy. Perceval, mindful of the teacher who had charged him never

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to slay one who had surrendered, returned: "Knight, by my faith, I will have no mercy on thee, till thou hast had mercy on thy friend; I swear, she hath not merited the woe thou hast made her endure." The other, who loved her more dearly than the apple of his eye, answered: "Friend, I will make amends, at your pleasure; what she wisheth I am ready to perform; my heart is dark, because of the ill I have wrought her." "Go to the richest manor which in this country thou ownest; bathe her, and care for her, until she be sound and well; then array thyself, and in rich attire convey her to the court of King Arthur; from me salute him, and put thyself at his mercy, in the same array as now thou wearest; if he demand whence thou comest, reply, from the man whom he made a red knight, by the counsel of Sir Kay his seneschal. The penance thou hast imposed on thy damsel shalt thou relate in the hearing of the queen and her maidens; of these one I prize, for that she smiled on me, wherefore did Kay stun her with a buffet; seek her, and declare, that never will I enter King Arthur's court until I have avenged her so well, that she may count herself blest."

℄ The knight answered, that he would cheerfully proceed, and deliver the message; he

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would have taken Perceval to his house, that his wounds might be drest, but the latter replied: "Go, and fortune attend thee! I will seek shelter elsewhere." On that, they parted without further words.

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THAT evening, the Proud Knight of the Plain caused his friend to be cared for in such manner, that her beauty was restored; after that, with no other retinue, he proceeded to Caerleon, where the king was holding court in private fashion, for with him he had no more than three thousand knights. In their presence, he rendered himself to the king and said: "Sir, your prisoner am I, to perform your pleasure; 't is my duty, for so commandeth the youth who asked you for the red arms." The king returned: "Fair sir, disarm yourself! May he who hath bestowed on me this present have joy and good fortune! For his sake, be welcome and honored in my house." "Sir, ere my arms be laid aside, I have more to say; I entreat, that the queen and her maidens hear my news, which must not be told save in presence of the damsel whom Kay buffeted because she laughed; 't was her only fault."

¶ The king summoned the queen, who came with her maidens, two and two; when she had taken her seat, the Proud Knight said: "Lady, a knight biddeth me greet you, who weareth red arms; he sendeth to you my friend, the damsel here present." "Friend," answered the

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queen, "his mercy!" With that, he related the damsel's shame, and why it had befallen her; they pointed out the girl whom Kay had beaten, and the knight cried: "Maiden, he who sent me hither bade me greet you on his behalf, and assure you, that he will not enter the court until he hath requited your blow."

℄ At these words, the fool leapt up for joy and shouted: "Kay shall abye it dearly, and that soon." The king exclaimed: "Ha, Kay, thou didst wrong, to deride the varlet; thy insolence hath robbed me of him, so that I look to see him no more." He declared the knight free from prison, and bade him be seated and disarm himself. Sir Gawain, who sat near, asked: "Sir, in God's name, who could make recreant so brave a knight? In all the isles of the sea have I never known any man in chivalry equal to this one." "Fair nephew, I know not; I asked no questions, when he begged me to make him a knight; I, who saw that he was fair, said: 'Brother, with all my heart; alight, until they bring you arms all of gold.' He answered, that dismount he would not, till he had obtained other arms, which were red; and that he would accept none, save those of the varlet who had stolen my golden cup. Kay, who was jealous, as he is and will be, mocked, and said: 'Friend, the

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king giveth you the arms; go take them.' He, who understood not jesting, thought that Kay spoke in earnest, and went in pursuit of the knight, whom he slew with a dart. How began the assault, I know not, but the Red Knight of the Forest beat him in his pride; and the varlet, with a javelin, slew and stripped him. By St. Géri my lord, whom sincerely I worship, never will I sleep in the same place, hall or bower, two nights together, until I find him, if he liveth, on land or sea."

¶ After the king had sworn, all averred, that there was naught but to go. Then might be seen packing of cloths and pillows, coffers filled and wains freighted with tents and pavilions; a skilful clerk, in a day, could not write down the harness and furniture.

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Perceval's Revery

THE king and his barons parted from Caerleon; not a damsel but the queen took to enrich her train. That eve, they encamped in a meadow, by the edge of a wood; during the night fell snow, for it was a cold country. Perceval, who had risen early, came to the field where was lodged the retinue of the king. Before him passed a flock of birds, who had been dazzled by the snow; they flew cackling, chased by a falcon, who overtook one of the flock, that had lagged behind her mates, and pounced on her; the falcon, being gorged, did not feed, but abandoned his prey.

¶ Perceval galloped to the spot; the bird had been wounded in the neck, and shed three drops of blood, that spread on the white snow like a natural color; as the knight approached, the bird took wing, for it had received no further harm. Perceval saw the beaten snow and the red blood; he leaned on his lance to gaze, for he thought it resembled the fresh hue in the face of his fair friend. He mused until he forgot himself, remembering how in her countenance red lay on white, as the crimson drops contrasted with the white snow.

¶ In this manner passed the morn, until from

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the tents squires saw the knight; thinking him asleep, they ran to tell the king, who slumbered in his tent. As they approached, they met Sagramore, surnamed the Unruled. "Ha," he exclaimed, "whither so fast?" "Sir, outside of this camp we have seen a knight asleep on his steed." "Is he armed?" "Faith, yes." "I will speak with him, and bring him in." Sagramore entered the tent, and waked the king: "Sir, yonder is a knight, asleep on the field." King Arthur bade him go fetch the knight; accordingly, he took arms, and rode up to the stranger. "Sir," cried he, "you must come to court." Perceval seemed not to have heard; the words were repeated, yet he remained mute. Sagramore grew wroth: "By St. Peter the apostle, come you shall, in your own despite; I am sorry I accosted you, for I have wasted my words." Forthwith Sagramore displayed the banner wrapt round his lance, and took ground, shouting to the knight, that he must defend himself or he would strike him. Perceval saw him arrive, and woke out of his muse; he spurred, and the two met; Sagramore shivered his lance, while with his own, that remained whole, Perceval dealt so hard, that Sagramore was thrown on the ground, while his horse ran to the tents. Some were sorry, but Kay, who could

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not restrain his bitter wit, cried to the king: "Fair sir, here cometh Sagramore, who hath grasped the knight's rein, and bringeth him perforce." "Kay," returned King Arthur, "'t is wrong to deride worthies; go, and see if you can do better." Kay cried with joy: "Since you desire, lief or loath, I will fetch him, and force him to name his name."

¶ So speaking, the seneschal took arms, and rode toward the youth, who was so taken up with the three drops that he minded naught beside. A long way off, Kay cried: "Vassal, come to the king, or it shall cost you dear!" Perceval turned his horse's head, and pricked him with his spurs; each did his best, and they met with ire; Kay used all his strength, so that his lance crumbled like bark, while Perceval took Kay on the boss of the shield, flinging him against a stone in such manner that the collar-bone was put out, and between elbow and wrist his right arm snapped like a twig, as the idiot had predicted, for true is a fool's guess. Kay fainted with the pain, while his horse fled to the tents; varlets caught the steed, and lords and ladies lamented, for they supposed the seneschal slain. On his part, Perceval rode back to his place, and once more leaned on his lance, regarding the drops of blood.

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¶ Sir Gawain accosted the king: "Sir, so God aid me, 't is wrong, as you yourself have often affirmed, to disturb a knight at his revery; men come to mischance who so proceed; he was pensive, because of some loss, or for the sake of his fair friend, of whom he had been deprived. If it were your will, I would study his face, and if I found he had emerged from his muse, I would conduct him to your presence." In anger, Kay cried: "Ha! Sir Gawain, is this the way in which you make your prisoners! When a knight hath fought sufficiently, then is the time to beg him that he will suffer himself to be taken. You sell fair words dear! I am proud, and say wicked things; fie on the lips that say so! This task you can achieve in silken coat; no sword will be drawn or lance broken; you have only to say: 'Sir, God save you, and give you joy and health!' and he will do your pleasure; you know how to stroke the cat." "Ha, Sir Kay, you might use fairer words! Is it on me you vent your spleen? I will fetch him, fair friend, if I may; I have not yet received such wage as you have earned." "Go, nephew," said the king, "bring him if you can, but take your arms."

¶ Gawain armed himself, and mounted a horse strong and nimble; after that, he rode to the

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stranger, who supported himself on his lance, and was not weary of his dream. Howbeit, the sun had dissolved two of the drops, and the third was diminishing; on this account, Perceval was not so deep in his muse. Peacefully Sir Gawain ambled, and said: "Sir, I would have greeted you, had I been sure that your heart resembleth mine; I am the messenger of the king, who entreateth you to come and speak with him." Perceval answered: "Here were two, who would have forced me away, while I was taken up with a thought that gave me delight; they who wished to rob me found not their gain; here were three drops of blood that adorned the white snow; as I gazed, it seemed to me I beheld the fresh color on the face of my fair friend." "Indeed, 't was a courteous fancy, and sweet; rude was the man who wished to take it from your heart. Now would I know your will; if it displease you not, I would lead you to the presence of the king." "Tell me first if Kay be there." "Yonder he is; and know, 't was he who jousted with you, and suffered such harm that his right arm is broken, and his collar-bone out of joint." "Then, I think I have avenged the buffet he bestowed on the maid."

¶ When Sir Gawain heard, he wondered, and

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exclaimed: "Sir, so God aid me, you are the man whom the king seeketh; in God's name, how are you called?" "Perceval, sir; and you?" "Gawain." "Gawain?" "Truth, fair sir." Perceval was overjoyed, and cried: "Sir, in many places have I heard your name praised; fain would I make your acquaintance, if such be your will." "By my faith, it pleaseth me yet more than it doth you." "Then, I will accompany you with joy, for so I ought, since I am your friend." Each ran to embrace the other; they unlaced helm and ventail, and doffed their arms; after that, they went side by side, with great pleasure. The varlets, who saw them from the tents, went to the king, and said: "Sir, in faith, Sir Gawain is bringing the knight, and they are making much of one another."

¶ The knights who heard ran out of the camp, and made haste to meet them, while Kay cried: "Sir Gawain, your nephew, hath earned great glory; it hath been a desperate battle; he deserveth fame, for he hath accomplished more than we could do, with all our pains." So Kay railed; but Sir Gawain would not bring his mate until he had led him to his own tent; from a chest his chamberlain took robes, and clad Perceval in a coat and mantle that set off his beauty; when this had been

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done, the two knights, hand in hand, went before the king, who sat in front of his pavilion. Sir Gawain cried: "Sir, I bring you the man whom you have longed to see, these two sennights; 't is the same of whom you are in quest, and whom oft have you mentioned." "Fair nephew, your great mercy!" cried the king, who rose to receive the stranger, and said: "Fair friend, welcome! Prithee tell me by what name I shall call you." "By my faith, I will conceal it not; fair sir king, my name is Perceval the Welshman." "Ha, Perceval, fair sweet friend, since you have come to my court, with my consent never shall you depart; since first I set eyes on you, I have been sorry for your sake, for I knew not the honor to which God had destined you; yet it was foretold, so that my court knew, by the maid and the fool who were injured by Kay; of your chivalry true tidings have we heard."

℄ Now arrived the queen, to whom the news had been told; when Perceval was informed who she was, and in her retinue saw the damsel who had smiled at his sight, he ran, and exclaimed: "God give joy and honor to the fairest and best of all dames who live, by testimony of eyes that see her, or have seen!" The queen responded: "And you, fair sir, are found a true knight, of prowess fair and no-

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ble." After that, Perceval saluted the maiden who had laughed for his sake, and cried: "Fair, if need were, I would be your knight, aid you should not lack."

For this offer, the damsel returned thanks.

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Denunciation

VER Perceval the Welshman great mirth made the king, with the queen and his barons, who conducted him to Caerleon, whither at evening they returned, and continued their festival. Their pleasure lasted until toward noon they saw approach a damsel, who rode a tawny mule, and in her right hand carried a scourge; her black hair was tressed with two braids, and if all be true that the book relateth, never in hell was aught so loathly; iron-dark were her hands and nails, and her closed eyes small, like a rat's; her nose was of ape and cat, and her lips of ass and bull; her red teeth resembled the marrow of an egg; bearded was she, humped breast and back, her reins and shoulders twisted, like the roots of a tree. Never in royal court was such damsel seen.

¶ The king and his barons she saluted, save Perceval alone, and cried, as she sat on her fawn-colored mule: "Ha, Perceval, Fortune showeth in front curly, and behind bald! Cursed be he who greeteth thee, or wished thee any good! Luck thou didst not deserve, when to thee herself she offered! Thou didst enter the house of the Fisher King, thou didst see the lance that bleedeth, and didst find it

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so hard to open thy lips and inquire, that thou couldst not demand, wherefore riseth the blood-drop on the point of the white glaive, and of the grail didst never ask what honorable man therewith was served. Unhappy is he who waiteth a time, when occasion is fair enough! Wretched wert thou, who hadst time, and place, and leisure sufficient; to thy grief wert thou mute; hadst thou inquired, the king who despaireth would have been healed of his wounds, and in peace retained the land, which now he will never possess; knowest thou what will happen, because of thy fault? Ladies will lose their husbands, lands will be wasted, and maidens uncounselled; orphaned and widowed will they remain, and many a knight perish; all their sorrows will come of thee."

℄ After that, to the king she said: "Sir, I depart; be not vexed, for to-night I must be far hence; I know not have you heard of the Haughty Castle, where this eve I must lodge. There abide knights of fame, five hundred sixty and five, and each with his friend, a lady gentle and fair; I tell you, for none who thither repaireth shall lack joust and battle; who desireth chivalry, shall not miss, if he seek it there. But if any wisheth the greatest glory, I know where it is to be earned; on the height

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above Montesclaire is a damsel beleaguered; fame shall he gain, who may end the siege, and deliver the maid; all praises shall be his own, and the Sword with the Strange Hangings securely may he wear, to whom God such fortune granteth."

¶ With these words she parted. Sir Gawain rose up, and declared that he would do his best to succor the maid, while Girflet son of Do affirmed, that if God helped him, he would wend to the Haughty Castle. "And I," said Cahadin, "will not tarry until I reach the dolorous mount." Perceval, on his part, cried that he would not lie two nights in the same hostel, nor avoid any dangerous pass of which he might hear news, nor would he refrain from encountering the bravest of knights, or two at the same time, until he should have learned who was served with the grail, and until he should have found the bleeding lance, and discover why it bled; this quest he would not abandon, by reason of any woe.

¶ While the knights were taking arms, entered Guigambresil, bearing a golden shield, banded with steel. He knew the king, and saluted him as he ought; Sir Gawain he did not greet, but cried: "Gawain, thou didst slay my lord, striking him treacherously, without challenge, to thy shame and reproach; let

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these barons know that I have spoken truth." At these words, Gawain leapt up, abashed; Agravain the haughty rose, and embraced his brother, exclaiming: "In God's name, fair sir, dishonor not your line; from the accusation of this knight I promise that I will defend you." Gawain replied: "Brother, none shall defend me, save myself alone. If I had wronged the knight, and I knew it, I would blithely make amends, in such wise that his friends and my own should approve; but since he hath insulted me, I stand on my defence, and render my gage to meet him, when and where he pleaseth." Guigambresil responded, that he would convict him of treason, within forty days, at the court of the king of Cavalon. "I," answered Sir Gawain, "will follow forthwith, and it shall be seen which hath the right."

℄ Guigambresil took leave, while Sir Gawain armed himself, to depart without delay; he had with him horse and lance, helm and shield, for it was not his custom to borrow; he took seven squires, with seven horses and two shields. At his leave-taking, many a lady beat her breast and tore her hair; not one was too discreet to mourn.

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Confession and Absolution

PERCEVAL, saith the tale, had so forgotten himself that he remembered God no longer; during five years, he entered no monastery, nor adored God or his cross. This time in such manner he spent, yet chivalry he did not abandon; he sought out strange adventures, the sternest and most trying, and so well acquitted himself, that never did he fail in aught he undertook. Sixty knights of renown he sent prisoners to King Arthur's court, but all this while never bethought him of God.

¶ At the end of these years it befell, while riding through a desert country, armed with all arms, according to his custom, that he encountered three knights, with ladies to the number of ten, whose heads were wrapped in their capes, and who were making their pilgrimage clad in no garment, save woollen gowns, such as penitents wear. At the armed knight marvelled the dames, who fared barefoot, doing penance for their sins. One of the knights stopped Perceval, and cried: "Fair dear sir, believe you not in Jesus Christ, who wrote the new law, and to Christians gave? Certes, 't is very wrong to carry arms on the day when Christ died."

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℄ Perceval, who took no note of seasons, so sad at heart was he, replied: "What, then, is to-day?" "What, sir? 'T is the adored Friday, on which in simplicity ought men to worship the cross, and for sin's sake weep; on this day crucified was He, who was sold for thirty pence; He, who was free of sin, beheld the sin wherein was enmeshed the world, and for our sakes became man; 't is true, God and man were one; the Virgin bore a son, conceived by the Holy Ghost, in whom did God receive flesh and blood; 't is sure, His deity was covered with flesh of man, and he who doth not so receive Him shall never His face behold; of the Virgin Lady He was born, and with His holy Godhead took human form and soul, He, who of a verity to-day was fixed on the cross, and from hell delivered His friends; holy was that death which saved the living, and to life awakened the dead; the silly Jews, by their hate, wrought their harm and our weal, when on the cross they lifted Him; themselves they lost, us they saved. All those who have faith in Him, this day ought to spend in penitence; none who trusteth God should carry arms, in field or on road." "Whence come you, then?" cried Perceval. "Sir, from a holy hermit, who dwelleth in this forest, and subsisteth on naught, so pure he

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is, save on the glory of heaven." "In God's name, sirs, what did you do, what did you seek?" "What, sir?" replied one of the dames. "We demanded counsel of our sins, and we took confession; we performed the greatest work that a Christian can achieve, who wisheth to please God."

¶ What Perceval heard caused him to weep, and he was fain to speak with the holy man. "I also," he said, "would resort thither, if I knew the way." "Sir, he who desireth to go, let him keep the straight path by which we have come, through this thicket dense and small; let him guide himself by the branches that we knotted with our hands, what time we passed; for a token we did it, in order that none should miss the road, who toward the hermit repaireth."

¶ With that, they commended each other to God, and parted without further discourse; Perceval entered the path, sighing from his heart, for that he felt himself guilty toward God, and repented of his transgression; weeping, he traversed the wood; when he came to the hermitage, he dismounted and disarmed himself; he bound his horse to an oak, and entered the cell; in a little chapel he found the hermit and a priest, who were beginning the highest service and sweetest that in Holy

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Church is said. As he entered, Perceval threw himself on his knees; the good man called him, beholding his simplicity and grief. As the tears coursed down his cheeks, Perceval, who greatly dreaded that he had given offence to God, with joined hands clasped the hermit's feet, and besought counsel in his great need. The good man bade him utter his confession, for no hope could he have of remission of sins, unless he confessed and were repentant.

℄ "Sir," he said, "'t is full five years, that I knew not where I was, nor whither I wandered, nor have I loved God, or believed in Him; this while, I have wrought nothing but evil." "Ha, fair friend, tell me why hast thou so done, and pray God that He have mercy on the soul of His sinner." "Sir, in the house of the Fisher King was I, and saw the lance, whereof bleedeth the iron; of that drop that gathereth on the point of the white glaive, naught I inquired; since that time, certes, no amends have I made; and of the grail I saw, I asked not who therewith was served; since then, so much have I suffered, that fain would I have died; because of that sorrow, God I forgot, and never begged for mercy, nor have I performed aught whereby I might hope that ever mercy should I obtain."

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"Ha, fair friend," cried the holy man, "tell me, what name hast thou?" "Perceval, sir." At the word, the hermit sighed, for he knew the name, and said: "Friend, harmed thee hath a sin of which naught thou knowest, the grief of thy mother, when thou didst desert her, so that swooning on the earth she lay, at the head of the bridge, before the gate of her manor, and of that sorrow she died; because of the sin thence thou bearest, naught didst thou inquire respecting the lance or the grail; therefore hath much evil befallen thee; so long hadst thou not endured, were it not that she commended thee to God; such virtue hath her prayer, that for her sake, hath God looked favorably on thee, and redeemed thee from prison and death. Sin closed thy lips, when thou didst gaze on the iron, that never yet was staunched, and ask not why it bled; foolish wert thou, when thou didst fail to learn, who was served with the grail; my brother is he, thy mother his sister and mine; of the Rich Fisher I know, that he is son of the king, who causeth himself to be served with the grail. Think not 't is luce, salmon, or lamprey he receiveth; with a single wafer doth the holy man nourish his life, when 't is brought in this grail, so holy a thing is the grail; and so spiritual is he, that for his sustenance he

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needeth no more, than the wafer which in the grail is presented. Twenty years hath he spent in such state, that never hath he been able to issue from the chamber, whither thou didst see the grail proceed. Now I enjoin on thee and grant thee penance of thy sin."

¶ "Fair uncle," cried Perceval, "this I desire, with my whole heart; since my mother was your sister, you ought to call me nephew, and love me well." "Fair nephew, 't is true; now hearken to me; if thou repentest for thy mother's sake, fair repentance shall be thine; in the name of penitence, resort to the monastery, more willingly than elsewhere, and profit shalt thou receive; abandon it not, for any reason; when thou comest to a place where is monastery, chapel, or shrine, go when the bell ringeth, and after thou hast risen from thy knees, sorry thou wilt not be; if mass be begun, stay until the priest hath spoken and chanted the whole. If thou choosest, thou mayest still rise in worth, obtain honor and paradise. Believe in God, honor Him, and adore Him; rise before the priest, 't is a service that costeth little, and God loveth it, for it cometh of humility. If a lady ask thy aid, aid her, be she widow or orphan; this alms is pure; helping them, thou shalt do well, forsake it not for any cause. So for thy sin's

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sake will I have thee do, if thou wishest to obtain the grace that erst was thine own; tell me, dost thou so desire?" "Aye, with all my heart." "Then I beseech thee, two days here to remain, and for sake of penitence receive such fare as is mine."

¶ Perceval consented; the hermit whispered in his ear a prayer, and repeated it, until it had been learned by heart; in the orison were names of Our Lord, too mighty for lips of man to utter, unless in mortal peril; when it had been conned, he forbade it to be spoken save in fear of death, and Perceval promised.

¶ There he remained, listened to the service, and was glad; after that, he adored the cross, and wept for his sins, repenting sadly but calmly. That night for food he received what pleased the holy man to bestow; there was naught save cress and lettuce, with water of the well; his horse had a basin of barley, with a stall that suited the place. So Perceval knew, that on Friday God received death and was crucified; at Easter, with sincerity, he partook of the sacrament.

¶ Now hath been related the story of Perceval, so far as it hath been recited by the lips of Christian. It hath been told how he grew

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in his mother's manor, in the depths of the waste forest, ignorant of the world; how in the wood he met the knights, and fell in love with their armor gay; how he was attired like a rustic, and by reason of his innocence acquired the title of Welshman; how he parted for Arthur's court, in order to obtain knightly arms, and broke the heart of his mother, who died of grief; how he won for himself the red armor, and received lessons of chivalry; how he arrived at Beaurepaire, and delivered the fair Blancheflour, whose lover he became, and how he departed in search of his mother; how he found his cousin, the Fisher King, who should have been healed by the question, that out of simplicity he neglected to ask, and lost the happiness within his reach; how he won honor at court, and became the friend of the noblest of knights; how he was accused before the king, and out of self-reproach made a vow, that rendered him an exile; how he roved the world in a vain quest, suffering despair so great that he renounced God; how, after five years, he discovered his uncle, the hermit, who comforted him, and taught him the final lesson, that it is never too late to recover peace of mind. Now should be set forth, in what manner a second time he arrived at the castle of the Fisherman, and there

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healed his cousin; and how, being free of his vow, he was at liberty to return to the lady he loved. But so much must fancy conceive, for the hand that recorded the tale hath written no more.

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The Maid with the Narrow Sleeves

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The Maid with the Narrow Sleeves

IN an open country, Sir Gawain met a troop of knights, followed by a single squire, who led a Spanish charger, and about whose neck hung a shield. Gawain rode up to the squire, and asked: "Squire, tell me, what is yonder troop that hath ridden by?" The man answered: "Sir, Meliance of Lis, a knight hardy and brave." "Is it to him you belong?" "Nay, sir, my master is Teudaves, a knight as worthy." Sir Gawain said frankly: "Teudaves I know; whither fareth he? Tell me the truth." "Sir, he proceedeth to a tourney, which Meliance of Lis hath undertaken against Thiébault of Tintagel; if you take my advice, you will throw yourself into the castle, and take part against the outsiders." "How," cried Gawain, "was it not in the house of Thiébault that Meliance of Lis was nurtured?" "Aye, sir, so God save me; his father loved Thiébault, and trusted him so far, that on his deathbed he committed to his care his little son, whom Thiébault cherished, and protected, as well as he could, until arrived a time, when the youth petitioned his daughter, to bestow on him her love; but she replied,

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that she would never love him, until he should be made a knight. The youth, who was ardent, forthwith had himself knighted, and then returned to his suit. 'Nay,' answered the girl, 'it shall never be, until in my presence have you achieved such feats of arms, that my love may have cost you somewhat; for the things which come suddenly are not so sweet as those we earn; if you desire my love, take a tournament of my father; I wish to be certain that my love would be well placed, in case I had granted it.' What she advised, he performed; for over lovers hath Love such signiory, that they who are under his jurisdiction would never dare refuse aught that Love pleaseth to enjoin. And you, sir, sluggish will you be not to enter the castle, for they would need you greatly, if you would help them." Sir Gawain returned: "Brother, go thy way, it would be wise of you, and let my affairs be." The squire departed, and Gawain proceeded toward Tintagel, for there was no other way whereby he could pass.

℣ Thiébault had summoned all his kith and kin, who had come, high and low, old and young; but he could not get the leave of his privy council to joust with his master, for they feared that he would utterly ruin their castle; therefore the gates had been walled up with

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hewn stones and mortar, leaving no approach, save one small postern, which had a gate made of copper, and quartered with iron, as much as a cart could haul. Sir Gawain rode to the gate, behind the troop who carried his harness, for within seven leagues there was no other road. When he found the postern shut, he turned into a close below the tower, fenced with a palisade; under an oak he dismounted, and hung up his shields. Thither came the folk of the castle, most of whom were sorry that the tourney had been abandoned; in the fortress was an aged nobleman, puissant in land and lineage, whose word none disputed, however things went. A long way off the troop had been pointed out to him, and before they entered the close, he went to Thiébault, and said: "Sir, so God save me, I have seen two comrades of King Arthur, worthy men, who ride this way; I advise you, in good faith, to tourney with good hope, for we have brave knights, and servants, and archers, who will slay their horses, and I am sure that they will joust in front of this gate; if their pride bringeth them, the gain will be ours, and theirs the loss and shame."

¶ By reason of this counsel, Thiébault allowed as many as wished to take arms and sally; the knights were glad, and their squires ran after

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their horses, while dames and damsels ascended the high places to overlook the tourney. Below, on the meadow, these saw the arms of Sir Gawain, and at first supposed that there were two knights, because two shields were suspended from the tree; they exclaimed, that they were fortunate to see two such knights take arms in their presence. So thought some, but others cried: "Fair Lord God, this knight hath arms and steeds enough for two; if he hath no comrade, what doth he with two shields? Never was seen a knight who carried two shields at the same time; I think it very strange if one man means to bear two shields."

¶ While they conversed, and the knights issued from the castle, to the tower mounted the elder daughter of Thiébault, she for whose sake the tournament had been undertaken, with her younger sister, whose sleeves were so quaint that she was called the Maid with the Narrow Sleeves, for she wore them tight. In their company, dames and damsels had ascended the tower, and the tourney was joined in front of the castle. None bore himself so well as did Meliance of Lis, by the testimony of his fair friend, who cried to the ladies about: "Ladies, never did I see a knight who charmed me as much as doth

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Meliance of Lis; is it not a solace to view such a knight? The man must have a good seat, and be skilful in the use of lance and shield, who demeaneth himself so excellently." Her sister, who sat at her side, exclaimed that she saw a fairer; the elder was wroth, and rose to strike her sister; but the ladies interfered, and held her back, so that she missed her blow, which incensed her. In the tournament, many lances were shivered, shields pierced, and knights unhorsed; but it went hard with the man who met Meliance of Lis, for there was none he did not fling on the hard ground; if his lance broke, he dealt great blows with his sword, so that he bore himself better than any knight on either side, to the joy of his friend, who could not help crying: "Ladies, wonderful! Behold, the best bachelor, of whom minstrel hath ever sung, or whom eyes have ever seen, the fairest and bravest of all in the tourney!" The little girl cried: "I see a handsomer one, and 't is like, a better." Her sister grew hot. "Ha, girl, you were malapert, when you were so unlucky as to blame a person whom I praised! Take this, to teach you better another time." So speaking, she slapped her sister, so that she left on her cheek the print of her five fingers; but the ladies who sat about, scolded her, and took

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her away. After that, they fell to conversing of Sir Gawain; one of the damsels said: "The knight beneath yonder tree, why delayeth he to take arms?" A second, who was ruder, cried: "He hath sworn to keep the peace." A third added: "He is a merchant, don't tell me that he wisheth to joust; he bringeth horses to market." "He is a money-changer," cried a fourth; "the goods he hath he meaneth to sell to poor bachelors; trust me, in those chests he hath money or raiment."

¶ "You have wicked tongues," cried the little girl, "and you lie! Do you think a merchant beareth such huge lances? You tire me to death, talking such nonsense! Faith that I owe the Holy Spirit, he seemeth a knight rather than a merchant or changer; he is a knight, and looketh like one." The ladies cried with one voice: "Fair sweet friend, if he looketh so, it doth not follow that he is so; he putteth it on, because he wisheth to cheat the tariff; but in spite of his cleverness, he is a fool, for he will be taken up and hung for a cheat."

¶ Gawain heard all that the ladies said of him; he was ashamed and annoyed, but he thought, and he was right, that he lay under an accusation of treason, and that it was his duty to keep his covenant, or forever disgrace

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himself and his line; for this reason he took no part, lest, if he fought, he should be maimed or taken prisoner. Meliance of Lis called for great lances, to strike harder blows; until night fell, the tourney went on before the gate; the man who took any booty, carried it to some spot where he thought it would be safe. The ladies saw a squire, tall and strong, who held a piece of a lance, and on his neck bore a steel cap; one of the ladies, who was silly, called him and said: "Sir squire, so God help me, 't is foolish of you to make prize of this tester, these arms, and croup-piece; if you do a squire's duty, you deserve a squire's wage; below, in yonder meadow, is a man who hath riches he cannot defend; unwise is one who misseth his gain, while he hath power to make it; he seemeth the most debonair of knights, and yet would not stir if one plucked his beard; if you are sage, take the armor and the treasure; none will hinder." The squire went into the mead, and struck one of Gawain's horses, crying: "Vassal, are you sick, that all day long you gape here, and have done nothing, neither pierced shield nor shivered lance?" Gawain answered: "Pray, what is it to you why I tarry? You shall know, but not now; begone about your business!" The squire withdrew, for Gawain was

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not the sort of man to whom he dared speak of anything unpleasant.

℄ The tourney ceased, after many knights had been killed and horses captured; the outsiders had the best, and the folk of the castle gained by the intermission; at parting they agreed that on the morrow with songs would they meet, and continue the encounter. So for that night they separated; those who had made the sally returned to the castle, followed by Sir Gawain; at the gate he met the nobleman that had advised his lord to engage in the tournament. The vavassour accosted him debonairly, and said: "Fair sir, in this castle your hostel is ready; if it pleaseth you, remain, for if you should go forward, it would be long ere you arrived at a lodging; therefore I beg you to stay." "I will tarry, your mercy! I have heard worse words." The vavassour led the guest to his house, speaking of this and that, and asked him, wherefore on that day he had not borne arms; Sir Gawain explained how he had been accused of treason, and was bound to be on his guard against prison and wounds until he could free himself from the reproach cast on him, for it would be to the dishonor of himself and his friends if he failed to appear at the time appointed. The vavassour praised him, and said if this

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were the reason, he had done right; with that, he led him to his house, where they dismounted. The folk of the castle blamed the nobleman, and wondered how his lord would take it; while Thiébault's elder daughter did her best to make trouble for Gawain, on account of her sister, with whom she was angry. "Sir," she said to her father, "on this day you have suffered no loss, but made a gain, greater than you imagine; you have only to go and take it; the man who hath brought it will not venture to defend it, for he is wily; lances and shields he bringeth, with palfreys and chargers, and maketh himself resemble a knight, to cheat the customs, so that he may pass free when he cometh to sell his wares; render him his desert; he is with Garin son of Bertan, who hath taken him to lodge at his house; I just saw him pass."

¶ Thiébault took horse, for he himself wished to go yonder. The little girl, who saw him leave, issued secretly by a back gate, and went straight down hill to the house of Garin, who had two fair daughters. When these perceived their little lady, they ought to have been glad, and glad they were; each took her by a hand, and led her into the house, kissing her eyes and lips.

¶ Meantime, Garin and his son Herman had

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left the house and were going up to the castle to speak with their lord; midway they met Thiébault, and saluted him; he asked whither Garin was going, and said he had intended to pay him a visit. "By my faith," replied the vavassour, "it will not displease me, and at my house shall you see the fairest of knights." "'T is even he whom I seek," returned his lord, "to arrest him; he is a merchant, who selleth horses, and pretendeth to be a knight." "Alas," answered Garin, "'t is a churlish speech I hear you make! I am your man and you my master, but on the spot, I renounce your homage, and in the name of all my line, now defy you, rather than suffer you to disgrace my hostel." "Indeed," answered Thiébault, "I have no desire to do any such thing; neither yourself or your house shall ever receive aught but honor from me; not but what I have been counselled so to proceed." "Your great mercy!" exclaimed the vavassour; "it will be my honor if you visit my guest."

¶ Side by side, they went on, until they arrived at the house. When Sir Gawain saw them, out of courtesy, he rose, saying: "Welcome." The two saluted him, and took their seats at his side. With that, the nobleman, who was the lord of that country, inquired

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why he had taken no part in the tourney; and Gawain narrated how a knight had accused him of treason, and he was on his way to defend himself in a royal court. "Doubtless," answered the lord, "'t is sufficient excuse; but where is the battle to be held?" "Sir, before the king of Cavalon, whither I am journeying." "And I," said the nobleman, "will guide you; since you must needs pass through a poor country, I will provide you with victual, and packbeasts to carry it." Gawain replied that he had no need to accept aught, for if it could be purchased, he would have victual and lodging wherever he went.

¶ With these words, Thiébault took leave; as he departed, from the opposite direction he saw come his little daughter, who embraced Gawain's leg, and cried: "Fair sir, listen; I am come to complain of my sister, who hath beaten me; so please you, do me justice." Gawain made no reply, for he did not know what she meant; he put his hand on her head, while the damsel pulled him, and said: "To you, fair sir, I complain of my sister; I do not love her, since to-day she hath done me great shame for your sake." "Fair one, what have I to do with that? How can I do you justice against your sister?" Thiébault, who had

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taken leave, heard his child's entreaty, and said: "Girl, who bade you come hither, and complain to this knight?" Gawain inquired: "Fair sweet sir, is this maid your daughter?" "Aye, but never mind what she says; a girl is a silly creature." "Certes, I should be churlish if I did not do what she desires. Tell me, my sweet child and debonair, in what manner I can justify you against your sister?" "If it pleaseth you, for love of me, bear arms in the tourney." "Tell me, dear friend, have you ever before made petition to any knight?" "No, sir." "Never mind her," exclaimed her father, "heed not her folly." Sir Gawain replied: "Sir, so aid me the Lord God, for so little a girl, she hath spoken very well, and I will not refuse her; to-morrow, if she wisheth, I will be her knight." "Your mercy, fair sweet sir!" cried the child, who was overjoyed, and bowed down to his feet.

¶ Without further words, they parted; Thiébault carried his daughter back on the neck of his palfrey; as they rode up the hill, he asked what the quarrel had been about; she told him the story, from beginning to end, and said: "Sir, I was vexed with my sister, who declared that Meliance of Lis was the best of all the knights; and I, who had seen this knight in the meadow, could not help say-

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ing that I had seen a fairer, wherefore my sister called me a silly girl, and beat me; fie on me, if I take it from her! I would cut off both my braids close to my head, which would be a great loss, if to-morrow in the tourney this knight would conquer Meliance of Lis, and put an end to the fuss of madam my sister! She talked so much that she tired all the ladies; but a little rain husheth a great wind." "Fair child," said her father, "I command and allow you, in courtesy, to send him some love-token, a sleeve, or a wimple." The child, who was simple, responded: "With pleasure, since you bid me; but my sleeves are so small, I should not like to send them; most likely he would not care for them." "Daughter, say no more; I will think about it; I am very glad." So speaking, he held her in his arms, and had great joy of embracing and kissing her, until he came in front of his palace. When his elder daughter saw him approach, with the child before him, she was vexed, and exclaimed: "Sir, whence cometh my sister, the Maid with the Narrow Sleeves? She is full of her tricks; she hath been quick about it; where did you find her?" "And you," he returned, "what is it to you? Hush, for she is better than you are; you pulled her hair and beat her, which grieveth me; you acted rudely;

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you were discourteous." When she heard her father's rebuke, the maid was greatly abashed.

¶ Thiébault had brought from his chests a piece of red samite, and bade his people cut out and make a sleeve, wide and long; then he called his daughter, and said: "Child, tomorrow rise betimes, and visit the knight before he leaveth his hostel; for love's sake, you will give him this new sleeve, which he will wear in the tourney when he goeth thither." The girl answered, that so soon as ever she saw the clear dawn, she would dress herself and go. With that, her father went his way, while she, in great glee, charged her companions that they would not let her oversleep, but would wake her when day broke, if they would have her love them. They did her will, and when it dawned, caused her to wake and dress; all alone, she went to the house where lodged Sir Gawain; but early as it was, the knights had risen, and resorted to the monastery, to hear mass sung. She waited until they had offered long orisons, and listened to the service, as much as was right. When they returned, the child rose to receive Sir Gawain, and cried: "Sir, on this day may God save and honor you! For love of me, wear the sleeve, which I carry in my hand."

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"With pleasure," he answered; "friend, your mercy!"

¶ After that, the knights were not slow to take arms, and poured out of the town, while the damsels again went up to the walls, and the dames of the castle saw approach the troops of brave and hardy knights. They rode with loose rein, while in front came Meliance of Lis, who sped so fast that he left the rest in the rear, two roods and more. When his maiden saw her friend, she could not keep her peace, but exclaimed: "Ladies, yonder comes the man who hath the lordship of chivalry!" As swiftly as his horse would bear him, Sir Gawain charged Meliance of Lis, who did not evade the blow, but met it boldly, and shivered his lance; on his part, Sir Gawain smote so hard that he grieved Meliance, whom he flung on the field; the steed he grasped by the rein, and gave to a varlet, bidding him take it to the lady on whose account he had entered the tourney, and say that his master had sent her the first spoil he had made on that day. The youth received the charger, saddled as it was, and led it toward the girl, who sat at the window of the tower, whence she had witnessed the joust; when she saw the encounter, she cried to her sister: "Sister, there lies Meliance of Lis, whom you lauded so highly! A wise

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man ought to give praise where it is due; you see, I was right yesterday, when I said I saw a better knight." Thus she teased her sister, who grew wild, and cried: "Child, hold your tongue! If you say another word, I will slap you, so that you will not have a foot to stand on!" "O sister," answered the little girl, "remember God! You ought not to beat me because I told you the truth; I saw him tumble as well as you; I think he will not be able to get up; be as cross as you please, I must say that there is not a lady here who did not see him fall flat on the ground." Her sister would have struck her, had she been able; but the ladies around would not permit it.

¶ With that, arrived the squire, who held the rein in his right hand; he saw the damsel sitting at the window, and presented the steed; she thanked him a hundred times, and bade the horse be taken in charge; the squire returned to tell his master, who seemed the lord of the tournament, for there was no knight so gallant that he did not cast from the saddle, if he reached him with the lance. On that day he captured four steeds; the first he sent to the little damsel, the second to the wife of the nobleman who had been so kind, and the third and fourth to his two daughters.

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¶ The tourney was over, and the knights entered the city; on both sides the honor belonged to Sir Gawain. It was not yet noon when he returned from the encounter; the town was full of knights, who ran after him, inquiring who he was, and of what land. At the gate of his hostel he was met by the damsel, who did naught but grasp his stirrup, salute him, and cry: "A thousand mercies, fair sweet sir!" He answered, frankly: "Friend, before I am recreant to your service, may I be aged and bald! I shall never be so remote, but a message may bring me; if I know your need, I shall come at the first summons, whatever business be mine." While they talked her father came, and wished Sir Gawain to tarry with him for that night; but first he entreated, that if his guest pleased, he would tell his name. Sir Gawain responded: "Sir, I am called Gawain; my name was never concealed, nor have I ever related it before it hath been asked." When Thiébault knew that the knight was Sir Gawain, his heart was full of joy, and he exclaimed: "Sir, be pleased to lodge with me, and accept my service; hitherto I have done you little worship, and never did I set eyes on a knight, whom so much I longed to honor." In spite of urging, Sir Gawain refused to stay. The little girl, who was good

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and clever, clasped his foot, and kissed it, commending him to God. Sir Gawain inquired why she had done that; and the damsel replied that she had kissed his foot, in order that he might remember her wherever he went. He answered: "Doubt it not, fair sweet friend! I shall never forget you, after I have parted hence." With that, Sir Gawain took leave of his host and the others, who one and all commended him to God. That night he slept in an abbey, and had all that was necessary.

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Merlin

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The Round Table

AFTER Uther Pendragon had become king of Britain, Merlin the seer took him aside, and said that he would have him perform a certain thing, which would render his reign forever memorable. Uther responded, that he was willing to do aught that was possible for man to accomplish, and Merlin related:—

"Sir, 't is known to you how Our Lord came to earth in order to redeem the world, and at the Last Supper said to His disciples, One of you shall betray me, and in what manner the evil-doer was separated from the Twelve. Afterwards it befell, that Our Lord suffered for our sakes, and Joseph of Arimathæa took His body from the cross. It came to pass, that Joseph quitted that country, and with his kindred and friends went into a wilderness. Because of their sins, a famine fell on them, and they made complaint to Joseph their master, who besought God to reveal what had been the cause of their disaster. Our Lord commanded Joseph to make a table in the name of that at which He had been seated at the Last Supper, and thereon to place the vessel out of which He and his Apostles had eaten, leaving one place empty,

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to signify the seat of Judas, who had withdrawn from the fellowship of the Twelve. Whosoever sat at this table was satisfied with such food as his heart desired; and by means of its virtue the good among his followers were separated from the bad. In this manner the Lord answered the prayers of Joseph; and the vessel, whereby they obtained so much grace, they called the Grail. Sir, if you hearken to me, after the pattern of the two former, will you establish a third table, which shall be of great service to body and soul, and one of the things in the world most renowned."

¶ Uther answered, that Merlin might act according to his pleasure, and prepare the table whenever he saw fit. Merlin bade the king convene his barons in Carlisle, at Whitsuntide; and he declared, that he would himself select such knights as were worthy to sit at the board. Accordingly, Uther sent out letters, and Merlin repaired to Carlisle, where he constructed the table, making it round, in order that it might resemble the habitable earth.

¶ At Whitsuntide, the knights of Britain were convened in Carlisle; Merlin chose the most honorable, and bade them be seated at the table, leaving one place unfilled. For a fortnight, the court tarried in Carlisle, while the

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king bestowed jewels and presents on dames and damsels. When it was time for the companions of the Round Table to part, they said they were unwilling to go, but wished to send for their wives and children, and remain in that place; for brief as had been the term of their acquaintance, they loved one another as father and son, and were resolved never to part company, until they should be separated by death. When Uther heard them so speak, he exclaimed that it was by the will of Our Lord that the table had been established, and entreated Merlin to reveal, who it was that should occupy the empty place. The latter replied, that not in Uther's day should the seat be filled, nor as yet born was the knight who was destined to sit in front of the Grail; but that these things should befall in the time of the king who was to come after. When he had so spoken, Merlin went his way, and for two years was absent from court.

¶ At this time, it pleased the king to keep Christmas in London, with the barons of his realm; and these obeyed his summons, so that the court was full of knights, dames, and damsels; among the rest came Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall, and Igerna his wife. Here shall not be recited the story, how Uther became enamored of Igerna, how the duke fled from

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the court and secured his wife within the castle of Tintagel, of the war which followed, and of the aid which Merlin rendered Uther; but the end was, that Gorlois perished in battle, and Uther married Igerna, by whom he had two children, a son and a daughter.

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The Consecration of Arthur

THE son of Uther and Igerna was entrusted to Merlin, who confided him to Auctor father of Kay; and the latter, who knew not whence came the boy, brought him up as his own son, giving him in baptism the name of Arthur. When Uther died, leaving no heir, the barons could not agree who should become king; they consulted Merlin, who advised them to put off the election until Christmas, for he said that a sign would be shown, whereby it would be determined who was to reign.

¶ On the day of the Nativity, the barons had gathered in the cathedral, to hear mass; as they issued, day had dawned, and in front of the minster, on a block of red marble, they saw an anvil, wherein a sword was buried to the hilt; and on the pommel of the brand it was written, that he who might be able to draw the weapon should be king of Britain. When the archbishop had read the legend, he put the stone in charge of worthies, and returned to the church, to celebrate mass; after the service, the knights gathered about the stone, and essayed their strength, but none could obtain the sword; and thus it continued all that week.

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¶ On the first day of the year, after the knights had dined, they went afield in order to tilt. Kay, whom his father had knighted on All Souls' Day, called his brother Arthur, and bade him fetch his sword, that he might take part in the mellay. Arthur went to their inn, but could not find the weapon; as he returned, he passed the minster, and observed the sword, which was fixed in the anvil; he grasped the hilt, and drew it with ease, concealing it under the skirt of his coat. His brother met him outside of the wall, and demanded his sword; Arthur replied, that he could not find it, but had brought the weapon from the stone. Kay took it, and exhibited it to his father, declaring that he ought to be king, for he had the sword; but when Auctor pressed him, Kay was ashamed, and owned that it had been obtained by his brother Arthur.

¶ Auctor bade Arthur replace the sword, and the youth thrust it into the anvil, where it remained as firm as before. With that, Auctor embraced his foster-son, and revealed to him that he was no child of his own; and he caused Arthur to make oath, that if ever he came to the throne, he would retain Kay as his seneschal, so long as he lived. Auctor summoned his friends, and told the archbishop, that he had a son not yet knighted,

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who should be allowed to make the trial. The bishop consented, and Arthur extracted the sword, and presented it to the bishop, who embraced him, and sang Te Deum; after that, he bade the youth replace the sword, which he did in the sight of all the world.

¶ The barons demanded, that the weapon should remain in its place until Easter, in order that those who had not yet made the attempt should be allowed an opportunity; and to this the archbishop agreed. When Easter came, no man had succeeded in drawing the sword, but Arthur removed it from the stone, as easily as before. The barons required that the consecration should be delayed until Whitsuntide; in the mean time, they put the youth to trial, and finding him wise and generous, offered no further opposition.

¶ At Whitsuntide, Arthur kept his vigil in the church, and was knighted by the archbishop; in royal robes, he was led in procession to the stone, where the bishop made him swear to support Holy Church, and maintain order and peace. With joined hands, Arthur drew the sword; holding it erect before his breast, he returned to the minster, and deposited it on the altar. After this had been done, he was anointed king.

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¶ A month later, King Arthur held court at Carlisle, whither came his mother, Lady Igerna, and Anna her daughter, wedded to King Lot of Lyonesse, with her four sons, Gawain, Agravain, Gaheries, and Gareth. At this feast, Merlin revealed the birth of Arthur, and bade the barons of Britain no longer scoff at their new king, but hold him in reverence, alike for his own worth, and as the son of Uther Pendragon. The king and his mother heard the tidings, and there was general joy throughout the realm of Britain. And the story says, at this visit, and before the birth of Arthur was known, he became the father of Mordred.

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Guinevere

THUS Arthur reigned, and Merlin served him, as he had served Uther his sire. His barons blamed the king, because he was slow to marry; and Arthur consulted Merlin, promising to do as the latter had advised. Merlin inquired, if there was any lady on whom the king's heart was set; and Arthur answered, that he loved Guinevere, daughter of Leodegan, who at that time was master of the Round Table that had been made for Uther, for she was the fairest lady in all the isles of the sea. Merlin returned, that it was the maid whom he himself would have chosen, and that he would go in person to seek her in marriage. Arthur lent him a hundred knights, with squires and servants as many as were needful, and Merlin went his way until he came to the kingdom of Leodegan, and asked for his daughter, that he might make her queen of the realm of Loegria. Leodegan was glad, and answered that it was greater preferment than he could have wished for his child, and he would willingly resign his own land, if Arthur desired, but since the king needed it not, he would give the most precious thing he possessed, the Round Table and its knights; of the hundred and fifty that

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had at first belonged to it, only a hundred were left, and he himself would already have filled their places, had not a hermit commanded him to forbear, predicting that the fifty to be added would be of greater worth than any to be found in his land. Merlin replied, that the table would come into the hands of one who would maintain it so honorably that in all future time it should never be equalled; the king told his knights, and they thanked him for giving them so good a lord.

¶ After three days, Merlin departed, taking with him the maiden, and the companions of the Round Table; if Leodegan had any fair youth or merry damsel, he sent them with his daughter. They took leave of the king, and journeyed until they came to Loegria; when Arthur heard that he was to have in his court the knights of the Round Table, he rode to meet them, and received them with all honor. Merlin bade the king fill up the vacant seats with those whom he esteemed noblest, and reject no man because of poverty, for a single unworthy companion would dishonor all the rest. Arthur replied, that Merlin himself should make the choice; and the latter returned, that he would arrange in such manner, that the seats should be occupied on the day of the wedding.

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King Arthur sent messengers to convey his tenants, and not one disobeyed, but all gathered at Camelot on the day appointed. Merlin selected the best knights he knew, and after he had chosen eight and forty, took them aside and charged them henceforth to love and esteem each other as brethren, for the sake of the sweetness of the table at which they were to sit; and he declared that their number should not be completed until the arrival of the good knight who should achieve the adventures of Britain; the seat in the middle he left empty, calling it the Siege Perilous. The king inquired, why it was so entitled; and Merlin responded, that slain or maimed would be every man who should attempt to occupy the place, unless it were the one who was fated to accomplish the adventures. He added, that he himself would not see the day, but that when it came, Arthur would have no long time to live; and he charged the king in the midst of his joy to be humble, and to remember his Creator, who had exalted him to the height on which he stood.

¶ After Merlin had chosen the forty-eight, he summoned the hundred, and bid them dwell in peace with their new brethren; the bishops he directed to bless the chairs, on which should sit so many knights honorable before

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God and the world. The Archbishop of Canterbury gave the benison, and the clergy put up orisons that the new knights might live together as brethren indeed. After this had been done, Merlin commanded the knights to do homage to the king; as they rose to take the oath, on every seat appeared letters, showing the name of him who occupied that place; all the chairs were full, save the middle and the last. The companions of the Round Table offered homage to King Arthur, and he accepted them as his vassals.

¶ At the end of that day, Gawain, the king's nephew, a fair youth, entreated his uncle that he might be made a knight, and Arthur granted his prayer; the same evening, Gawain, with other youths, kept his vigil in the church of St. Stephen. On the morrow, a peasant named Ares came to the court, and besought knighthood for his son Tor, and the king acceded to this petition. On the third day arrived King Pellenore, and knelt before Arthur, saying that he had heard of his fame, and come to be his vassal. Merlin bade the companions rejoice, for Pellenore should have the last place. Thus all the seats were full, save the Siege Perilous. Pellenore it was who had slain Lot, father of Gawain; and while the others were pleased, Gawain and his brother

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Gareth vowed that the day should come on which they would avenge the death of their sire. The story also says, that in the end Tor appeared to be the son of Pellenore, and no child of Ares.

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Miniene

REAT was the mirth of the barons of Britain, who were assembled at Camelot on the wedding night. The hall, in which the king feasted, stood at the head of the city, two bowshots from the forest, surrounded by an orchard of lofty trees. While the knights sat at meat, through the hall bounded a stag, chased by a greyhound; behind galloped a damsel, with a pack of dogs, who ran uncoupled after the quarry. The maid wore a green tunic, while round her neck hung an ivory horn, and in her hand she carried a bow. The stag rushed through the house, pursued by the hound, who caught him by the haunch; when the deer felt himself wounded, he leapt over one of the tables. With that, a knight who sat at the same table seized the hound, and ran to his horse, which stood saddled in the court, exclaiming that he had accomplished the purpose for which he had come; the damsel bade him release her hound, but he made no reply. The stag bounded into the orchard, whither the dogs followed and were lost to sight, while the maiden cried to the king, that she had been betrayed in his court, and that it was his duty to restore her possessions. Merlin rose, and

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promised that all should be made good; he advised the king to decree, that in future no knight should leave his seat until the meal was ended. King Arthur so commanded, and ordered Gawain to pursue the knight who had stolen the hound, and Tor to recover the dogs of the pack.

¶ As the king spoke, entered the hall an armed knight on a white charger; when he perceived the damsel, he rode up to her, and set her in front of his saddle, in spite of her resistance; after that, he departed at full speed. The maid cried out to the king, that her confidence had been ill bestowed, unless he rescued her. Arthur asked Merlin what should be done, and the latter advised, that Pellenore should be sent to bring back the damsel. In this manner were begun the adventures that took place at Arthur's court; the three knights achieved the tasks assigned to them, but in what manner shall not here be related.

¶ Pellenore brought back the huntress, and the king begged her to remain in his house. The queen inquired, what name she had received in baptism, and the damsel answered, that she was called Niniene, and that her father was a great man of Little Britain. Merlin was pleased with the fair maiden, and became so passionately enamored of her, that he

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was unwilling to quit her side; but she, on her part, hated him more than anything on earth. The maid, who was shrewd, told Merlin that she would never love him, unless he taught her as much of his art as he himself knew. He consented, and gave her so many lessons, that she became skilful in sorcery.

¶ In time it befell, that the king her father sent for Niniene, and the damsel returned to Little Britain, accompanied by Merlin. After a time, Merlin, by his art, foresaw that Arthur would encounter a great peril, and of this he informed the maiden. Niniene urged Merlin to proceed to Britain, and reproached him for abandoning his master in the season of danger, but he answered, that he would not go, for he knew that he must perish when he reached that country, and that an enemy was seeking to enchant him, but his skill could not reveal the name of the person. Niniene declared that she would herself go with him; with a retinue of attendants, the two passed the sea, and arrived in the kingdom of Loegria.

¶ On a day, as they were riding through the Perilous Forest, they came on a valley full of rocks. The night grew so dark, that they were unable to proceed; they encamped on the spot, making a fire of ash wood, and con-

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suming the provisions which they had brought with them from the castle where they had spent the night. After the meal, Merlin related, that among those rocks was to be found the fairest of chambers. Niniene inquired who it was that had fashioned a hall in the wilderness, and Merlin told the story, how a prince of that land had loved a damsel, and when his father would not hear of their coming together, had wrought a chamber in the rock, richly painted, and furnished with all necessaries, whither he had carried his friend, and where with great joy their lives had been spent; and how both had died on the same day, and been laid in the chamber where they had received their delight.

¶ Niniene was pleased, and cried that loyal lovers were they, who for the sake of each other had abandoned the world; but Merlin replied, that even so, for her sake, had he himself quitted the kingdom of Arthur. He bade two youths take torches, and led them along a narrow footpath, until they came to a door in the rock. This he opened, and showed them a fair hall, chiselled in the stone, and adorned with mosaic of gold. At the end was a second door; he threw it open, and exclaimed: "Now may you see the chamber, wherein repose the bodies of the lovers." All

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who were present agreed, that never had they beheld a fairer house. "Indeed," he cried, "fair it is, and fair were they who made it." With that, at the head of the chamber, he pointed out a tomb, covered with a red cloth, which was worked in gold, and broidered with figures of beasts. Niniene lifted the cloth, and saw a slab of red marble; she asked if it might be lifted by man, and he answered, no, but that he himself could raise it by his art; so saying, he took the stone, and set it beside the tomb. Within might be seen the bodies of the lovers, wrapped in winding sheets of white samite. Niniene cried: "Merlin, so much have you told me of this pair, that if it rested with myself, I would bestow their souls in the joy that eternally shall endure. Such pleasure have I taken in the hearing of their deeds, that this night I will pass in their chamber." Merlin answered, that it was well said, and he himself would keep her company. ℭ That eve, Merlin was not so cheerful as his wont; after he had been bedded, he fell into a deep slumber, so that sense and memory failed him. The damsel, who knew his state, rose from her couch, and wove about him spells, until he could move neither hand nor foot. After that, Niniene called her household, and showed them how like a clod he

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lay. "Is he not fairly enchanted, he who hath charmed so many?" Thus speaking, she bade her attendants take him by the head and feet, lay him in the tomb, and replace the stone. This with pains they accomplished; and the damsel by her spells, sealed the slab, so that it might never be removed; from that hour, none beheld Merlin, dead or alive.

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Lancelot of the Lake

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Lancelot of the Lake

OVER Benoic and Gannes, kingdoms of Little Britain, reigned two brothers, Ban and Bors. Ban was besieged by Claudas of the Desert, in his city of Trèves; when he saw that he would not be able to defend himself, the king obtained a truce of forty days, with leave to seek aid in Britain, on condition that if succor should not be forthcoming, the town should be surrendered. In the night, King Ban quitted his city, accompanied by his wife Helena, and a servant who carried his little son Lancelot; but scarcely had he passed the gate, when his traitorous seneschal surrendered the place, which was abandoned to fire and sword.

¶ At dawn, Ban and his troop reached the limits of his domain, and came to the foot of a hill, which offered a prospect of the surrounding country. Anxious to obtain a last look at his city, the king left his companions, and ascended the height; when he had gained the summit, and gazed toward Trèves, he beheld its walls and towers wrapt in flames. Unable to endure the spectacle, the king could sustain himself no longer; he fell from his horse, and gathering three blades of grass, in order to perform the last sacrament, ren-

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dered his spirit to God. The steed, frightened by the fall of his master, galloped down the slope, and joined the party below.

¶ When he saw the riderless charger, the servant left the child to the queen's care, and mounted the eminence; finding the lifeless body, he uttered loud shrieks. The queen, who heard the cries, set down Lancelot, and rode up the height; after she had learned what had befallen, she threw herself on the corpse of her husband, with every sign of grief. It was not long before she bethought herself of her boy, and descended the hill; when she reached the level ground, she saw the horses drinking in the lake, while a lady held in her arms the child, whom she covered with kisses. "Fair sweet friend," exclaimed the queen, "give me back my child." The fairy made no reply, but dived into the lake, carrying her burden.

¶ It so happened, that by the lake passed an abbess with two nuns, accompanied by a chaplain and a friar. These found the queen in her despair, and comforted her as well as they were able; they took her with them, and conveyed her to an abbey, where she became known as the Queen of Great Griefs.

¶ The fairy, who had stolen the little Lancelot, nursed him with tender care, in the castle

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where she dwelt, attended by a retinue of knights and dames. At the age of eight years, the boy received a tutor, who was charged to instruct him in all that is needed for conduct in the world; the lad learned to use the bow with skill, and to keep his seat on the pony, as he accompanied the fairy and her ladies, while they rode in the neighborhood of the lake.

¶ After he had conquered Benoic, King Claudas attacked Gannes, and in this war King Bors perished. His queen made her escape, with her two sons, Lionel and Bors; these she consigned to the care of a loyal knight, who reared them as his own children, while the lady took refuge in an abbey, not far from that in which Helena remained. In the end, when the princes had become fair youths, and were in danger from Claudas, they were rescued by the fairy, who carried them to her castle, where they dwelt as companions of their cousin Lancelot.

¶ When the latter had come to the age of eighteen years, he wished to repair to the court of King Arthur, in order that he might be made a knight. The fairy, grieved to lose her nursling, warned him that chivalry was a solemn thing, and its obligations stern; but when she found that it was impossible to dissuade him, she promised to grant his request.

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¶ On the eve of St. John, as King Arthur returned from the chase, and by the high road approached Camelot, he met a fair company. In the van went two youths, leading two white mules, one freighted with a silken pavilion, the other with robes proper for a newly made knight; the mules bore two chests, holding the hauberk and the iron boots. Next came two squires, clad in white robes and mounted on white horses, carrying a silver shield and a shining helmet; after these, two others, with a sword in a white sheath and a white charger. Behind followed squires and servants, in white coats, three damsels dressed in white, the two sons of King Bors, and last of all, the fairy with the youth she loved. Her robe was of white samite, lined with ermine; her white palfrey had a silver bit, while her breastplate, stirrups, and saddle were of ivory, carved with figures of ladies and knights, and her white housings trailed on the ground.

¶ When she perceived the king, she responded to his salutation, and said, after she had lowered her wimple and displayed her face: "Sir, may God bless the best of kings! I come to implore a boon, which it shall cost you nothing to grant." "Damsel, even it should cost me dear, you should not be refused; what is it you would have me do?" "Sir, dub this

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varlet a knight, and array him in the arms he bringeth, whenever he desireth." "Your mercy, damsel! to bring me such a youth! Assuredly, I will dub him whenever he will; but it shameth me to abandon my custom, for 't is my wont to furnish with garments and arms such as come hither to receive chivalry." The lady replied that she desired the youth to carry the arms she had intended him to wear, and if she were refused, she would address herself elsewhere. Sir Ewain said that so fair a youth ought not to be denied, and the king acceded to her entreaty. She returned thanks, and bade the varlet retain the mules and the charger, with the two squires; after that, she prepared to return as she had come, in spite of the urgency of the king, who had begged her to remain in his court. "At last," he cried, "tell us by what name are you known?" "Sir," she answered, "I am called the Lady of the Lake."

¶ For a long way, Lancelot escorted the fairy, who said to him as she took leave: "King's son, you are derived from lineage the most noble on earth; see to it that your worth be as great as your beauty. To-morrow you will ask the king to bestow on you knighthood; when you are armed, you will not tarry in his house a single night. Abide in one place no

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longer than you can help, and refrain from declaring your name until others proclaim it. Be prepared to accomplish every adventure, and never let another man complete a task which you yourself have undertaken." With that, she gave him a ring which had the property of dissolving enchantment, and commended him to God.

¶ On the morrow, Lancelot arrayed himself in his fairest robes, and sued for knighthood, as he had been commanded to do; Sir Ewain attended him to court, where they dismounted in front of the palace; the king and queen advanced to meet them; each took Sir Ewain by a hand, and seated him at a couch, while the varlet stood in their presence on the rushes that strew the floor. All gazed with pleasure, and the queen prayed that God might make him noble, for he possessed as much beauty as was possible for man to have.

¶ Of Lancelot the table hath much more to relate, which cannot here be recounted; how the lady of Nohan came to the court of King Arthur, in search of a knight who should protect her against the king of Northumberland, and how Lancelot entreated that the task might be assigned to himself; how he dissolved the enchantments of the Doloureuse Garde, which became his own castle, and was

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named the Joyeuse Garde; how Galehaut, son of the king of the Isles, admired him so much that he surrendered himself to King Arthur, in order to become Lancelot's companion; how Queen Guinevere was carried into captivity by Meleagant of Gorrè, a country from which no knight of Loegria had ever returned, and how Lancelot went in pursuit, and delivered the queen. But something shall presently be told of the love which grew up between Lancelot and the queen, and which in the end led to the death of King Arthur and the fall of the Round Table.

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The Quest of the Holy Grail

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The Knighting of Galahad

IN Camelot, on Whitsuneve, after the companions of the Round Table had returned from the service, the tables were set. At nones, rode into the hall a lady, who had ridden in such haste that her palfrey was all of a foam. She dismounted, and stood before the king, whom she saluted, and asked if Lancelot of the Lake were present. "Aye," answered the king, "in this hall," and he pointed him out. The damsel went to Lancelot's seat, and said: "Lancelot, in the name of King Pelles, I bid you attend me to yonder forest." He demanded whom she might be. "I belong," she said, "to him whom I have named." "And what would you of me?" "You shall learn," she said. "I will go," he returned, "so that it be in the name of God." With that, Lancelot bade a squire saddle his steed, and fetch his arms; when the king and the barons heard, they were disturbed, but perceived that there was no help. The queen inquired wherefore he quitted them on so holy a day; but the damsel said they should have him on the morrow, before the dinner hour. Lancelot mounted, together with the damsel, and set out unattended, save by a single squire, who had brought her to Camelot.

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¶ When they reached the forest, they followed a high-road, and proceeded until they came to a vale; at a cross, they saw before them an abbey, whither rode the damsel, as fast as her horse could carry her. When they reached the gate, the squire called, and they were admitted; Lancelot was received with joy, and conducted to a chamber, where he was disarmed. Asleep in two beds he found his cousins, Bors and Lionel, and awakened them; they embraced him with delight, and asked what chance had brought him from Camelot. Lancelot related how he had been summoned, wherefore he wist not; as they conversed, entered three nuns, leading Galahad, a child so fair that scarce could his equal be found. She who seemed highest in rank, held him by the hand, weeping tenderly. "Sir," she said, "I bring you our nursling, our comfort and hope, that you may make him a knight." Lancelot gazed at the youth, and found him so furnished with all beauty that he had never seen aught equally fair; he answered that their request should be granted. "Sir," said they, "in God's name let it be to-morrow or to-night." "In God's name," he responded, "as you will."

¶ That night Lancelot remained in the abbey, and caused the youth to keep his vigil in the

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church; on the morrow, at prime, he made him knight. He himself shod on one of the spurs, and Bors the other; after that, Lancelot gave him the accolade, praying that God might make him worthy, for beauty had he sufficient. When Lancelot had finished, he said: "Fair sir, attend me to the court of King Arthur." "Sir," replied Galahad, "with you I will not go." "Lady," cried Lancelot to the abbess, "suffer your new knight to accompany me to the court of the king, where he will be of more service than here with you." "Sir," she answered, "not now, but we will send him when it shall be time."

℄ Lancelot and his cousins took leave, and rode until they came to Camelot, at the hour of tierce, when the king had gone to the monastery to hear mass. They ascended to the hall, and began to talk of the fair child whom Lancelot had knighted; and Bors said that he had never seen any one who so marvellously resembled Lancelot. "Indeed," he cried, "I will never guess again, if it be not Galahad, whom Lancelot begot from the fair daughter of King Pelles, for he hath the feature of that line, and of our own." Lionel answered, that it was very likely; so they said, to see whether they could move Lancelot to speak, but he uttered no word.

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¶ When they ceased talking, they inspected the seats of the Round Table, and on each found inscribed the name of the knight who belonged to that place. As they came to the Siege Perilous, they saw letters which ran: "From the passion of Christ are fulfilled years four hundred and fifty-four, and on Whitsunday of this present year shall this seat find its lord." They exclaimed, that the adventure was strange; and Lancelot declared, none should read the legend, until the arrival of the man who was destined to accomplish the prediction; so speaking, he covered the chair with a silken cloth. After the king had returned from mass, and knew that Lancelot had arrived, with Lionel and Bors, he made much of them, and the knights of the Round Table were merry over the advent of the three comrades. The king bade the tables be set, but Kay cried: "Sir, if you sit at meat, you will infringe the custom of the house, for on so holy a day it is not your wont to dine, until some adventure be reported at your court." The king replied, that Kay spoke truth, but he had forgotten the rule, because of his joy in the arrival of Lancelot and his mates.

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AS they spoke, entered a varlet, who said to the king: "Sir, I bring tidings." "What are they? Tell me quickly." "Sir, on the great river have I seen a stone, floating down the stream; come and look, for 't is wonderful." The king went down from the palace, attended by his barons; when they came to the water, they found that the stone had touched the land; it was of marble, wherein was fixed a fair sword; on the pommel, made of a single jewel, was writ in letters of gold: "Me shall no man draw, but he at whose side I shall hang, the best of knights." When the king read, he cried to Lancelot: "Sir, yours should this sword be, for I know that you are the best." Lancelot answered, that it was not for him, and he would not dare touch it. "At least," said the king, "make the essay." "Sir, that I will not do, for no man can try and fail, but he shall be wounded by the same sword." "How know you that?" asked the king. "Sir, I am sure, and I would have you know, that to-day shall begin the great wonders of the Holy Grail."

¶ When the king perceived that Lancelot was unwilling, he made Gawain make the attempt; but the latter replied, that Lancelot was a bet-

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ter knight than himself. The king pressed his nephew to try, even if he failed; and Gawain put hand to the sword, but did not draw it. Then King Arthur commanded Perceval to prove his fortune; and the latter declared that he would keep Sir Gawain company; but he also was unable to get the sword. The others agreed that the writing spake true, and none ventured to make the trial. Kay said to the king: "Sir, by my head, you may be seated when you will, for an adventure hath not been wanting." The king and his knights returned to the palace, leaving the stone and the sword; King Arthur bade the horn be blown for water, and the companions of the Round Table sat down, every man in his place. On that day they were served by twelve crowned kings, with lords beyond number; the king sat on a lofty dais, and was waited upon by a train of noble barons; all the seats were full, save the Siege Perilous.

¶ After the first course, befell a strange thing; the doors and windows of the hall closed without hand, whereat they stood amazed, one and all. The king exclaimed: "Sirs, these be wonders, but methinks there are greater to come." As he spoke, how none knew, entered on foot an aged man in a white robe, and said: "King Arthur, I bring the desired knight, from

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the high race of David, of the lineage of Joseph of Arimathæa, by whom shall be achieved the adventures of Britain, and of foreign lands." At the speech, the king was blithe, and cried to the holy man: "Sir, welcome! If true be the news, acceptable is the knight, whom we expect to accomplish the adventure of the Holy Grail; never was any man received with such joy, as we shall make over him; whomsoever he may be, this or another, may good befall him, since he cometh of a descent so gentle." "In faith," said the hermit, "we shall see a fair beginning." With that he bade the knight disarm; this he did, and remained in a coat of red sendal, and a red mantle lined with ermine, cast over his shoulders.

¶ After the old man had arrayed the youth, he said to him: "Sir knight, follow me," and led him to the Siege Perilous, next to Lancelot; he lifted the silken cloth, and found letters saying: "This seat is Galahad's."

¶ The good man conned the letters, and found them newly written; he uttered the name aloud, saying: "Sir knight, sit you here, for the place is your own." The youth seated himself in safety, and said: "Sir, now depart, for you have accomplished what you were bidden to perform. Salute from me those of the Holy house, my uncle King Pelles, and

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my grandfather the Rich Fisher; tell them on my part, that I will come when I may." The hermit took his leave, commending to God the king and his knights; when they asked his name, he only said that in time should they know, if they ventured to inquire. He descended from the palace, and in the court found fifteen men, knights and squires, who had attended him; these went their way, and at that time the knights learned no more.

¶ When the companions of the Round Table saw the knight seated in the Siege Perilous, where so many had dreaded to place themselves, they marvelled, and knew not whence could come such favor, unless it were the grace of Our Lord. Small and great did honor to the guest, for they thought him the man by whom should be ended the adventures of the Holy Grail. Lancelot, who gazed more earnestly than the rest, perceived that it was the youth whom he had knighted, and was pleased with the discovery. He spake of many things, and would have had the guest tell somewhat of his condition; the youth dared not refuse, but answered this and that.

¶ After the meal, the knights of the Round Table rose from their seats; the king went to Galahad, and said: "Sir, welcome; a long time have we desired to behold you. Now we

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have you, God's mercy, and your own. For many reasons we have need of your presence, and among the rest, that you may achieve an adventure which to-day hath presented itself, and which others have failed to accomplish." "Sir, I would fain know what may be the undertaking whereof you speak." With that, King Arthur took him by the hand, and they descended from the palace, accompanied by the knights. The news came to the queen, as she sat at meat in her chamber; she bade the tables be removed, and cried to the noble dames about her: "Ladies, attend me to the river, for naught shall prevent me from beholding the end of this adventure." With these words, she descended, accompanied by her dames and damsels; when the knights saw, they cried one to another: "Stand back, here cometh my lady the queen," and the proudest made room.

¶ The king said to Galahad: "Sir, here is the feat of which I spoke, to draw this sword, which the noblest of my house have failed to remove." "Sir," he replied, "'t is not strange, for the task is mine, not theirs; and because of my confidence that I should obtain this, I brought hither no sword." So speaking, he grasped the weapon, and drew it as easily as if it had never adhered to the stone; then he

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said to the king: "Sir, now I require only a shield." "God will provide you," answered the king, "even as he hath with a sword."

¶ They gazed down the stream, and saw approach a damsel on a white palfrey, who rode fast; Lancelot she recognized, and cried with tears: "Ha, Lancelot, since the morn hath changed your state." "Damsel, tell me how." "I will do so, before the knights of this hall; formerly were you the best knight in the world, but to-day is a better, as hath been proved by the sword, which you have dared not touch; I tell you, in order that you may no longer account yourself the best of knights." Lancelot responded, that if he had supposed so, that morn would have taught him the contrary. The damsel turned to the king, and said: "King Arthur, the hermit declareth to thee, that on this day shalt thou receive the greatest honor ever rendered to British king; yet not for thee shall it befall, but for the sake of another. Knowest thou what? 'T is of the Holy Grail, that shall appear in thy house, and feed the companions of the Table Round." After she had spoken, she put herself on her way; knights and barons desired to learn who she was, but could not prevail on her to tarry.

¶ The king said to the barons of his house: "Fair lords, tidings have we learned of the

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Quest of the Holy Grail, that presently shall begin. Inasmuch as I know, that never again shall you assemble as to-day, in the prairie of Camelot would I have you begin a tournament so merry that it may be remembered by our heirs." The knights descended to the city, taking, some their arms, and others only coats and shields, for they trusted in their prowess. Great and small, they gathered on the mead; at the king's prayer, Galahad took hauberk and helmet, but could not be persuaded to carry a shield. With a great company of dames and damsels, the queen mounted the walls; in the prairie, Galahad broke lances so fast, that men and women called out, he had made a fair beginning, and might come to surpass all the knights of the Round Table; for there were but two he did not unhorse, Perceval and Lancelot.

℄ The tourney lasted until nones, when it was ended by the king, lest it should turn to earnest; Galahad removed his helm, which Bors carried, and was led through the main street, with bare head, for all to behold. When the queen saw him, she exclaimed that Lancelot must be his father, for never were two more alike; and it was not strange if he was noble, for else he would have been degenerate, seeing that he was descended from the best of knights,

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and his lineage was the noblest in the world. With that, the ladies went down from the walls, and repaired to vespers, because of the holiness of the day.

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The Questers' Vow

AFTER the king had returned from the monastery, he bade the tables be set, and the companions seated themselves, each in his own place. After they had put themselves at their ease, they heard a crash of thunder, so loud and strange that they thought the walls would have crumbled; presently shone the sun, a hundred times brighter than before, and the knights stared at each other, for they wist not whence came that brightness; for a long time they sat still, eying each other like dumb beasts. With that, by the main door, appeared the Holy Grail, covered with a white napkin, entering in such wise that no bearer could be perceived; as soon as it entered, the hall was filled with odors, as if had been scattered all the spices of the world. The Grail went about the palace, from wall to wall; as it passed, the tables were laden with such fare as each heart desired. When all the knights had been served, the Grail took leave, so suddenly that none knew in what manner it had gone; they who had lost their speech, now recovered their voice, and returned thanks to Our Lord for the blessing he had bestowed, in that he had honored them so much as to feed them with the grace of the Holy Grail. Of all who were

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present, gladdest was King Arthur, that God had granted him such honor as never before had been shown to any sovereign prince.

¶ So long as the meal lasted, the knights rejoiced, and spake of the favor they had received; but herein they were disappointed, that without covering had they not seen the Holy Grail; wherefore Sir Gawain cried: "This vow I make, that to-morrow, without further delay, will I enter on a quest, in such manner that I will devote a year and a day, if need be; nor, whatever befall, will I return to court until I have viewed the Grail more openly than it hath hitherto been visible, if in any wise I may come to behold it; and if that be impossible, then will I return." When the other knights heard, they rose and made the same pledge; and they declared that they would not cease to seek until they should be seated at the worthy table, where every day was provided food as sweet. King Arthur was troubled, and cried to Sir Gawain: "Ha, Gawain, thou hast betrayed me! This day hast thou deprived me of the most loyal company that ever have I found; when they separate, I know again they may not be united, but many will perish in this quest, that will continue longer than they deem. With all my might have I kept them, and I love them

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as brethren or sons; I may see no means whereby I may be able to endure their loss." The king grew pensive, and tears came into his eyes. "Ha, sir!" cried Lancelot, "such an one as yourself ought to cherish good hope. If we die in the quest, 't will be more honorable than if we ended elsewhere." "Lancelot," returned the king, "the great love I entertain for thee causeth me to utter such words; never had any Christian king so many good knights as myself this day, nor when they part shall ever they be gathered at one table, as up to this time they have been."

¶ Word went abroad, that on the morrow were to take leave the companions of the quest; when the dames and damsels of the queen's chamber heard the news, vexed and sad were they who had husbands and lovers among the knights of the Round Table. The queen herself wept, and cried: "'T is pity, for not without the death of many a worthy will this quest be ended; I wonder my lord hath permitted it, for of his barons so many will go that few will be left behind."

¶ When the tables were removed, and ladies and knights met, their grief was renewed; every dame or damsel said to her knight, that she would go in his company, and many knights would have consented, if it had not

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been for an old man, drest in robes of religion, who entered the hall, and said to the king, loud enough for all to hear: "Listen, sirs knights, who have sworn the quest of the Holy Grail! By me commandeth the hermit Nascien, that no dame or damsel take part in the quest, for 't is not terrestrial, but it shall be the beginning of the mystery of Our Lord, which He will reveal to the good knight whom among the others hath He chosen to be his servant, to whom shall be disclosed what heart of man hath not dreamed, nor tongue of man told." On account of these words the dames and damsels remained; the king kept the holy man, and would have had him tell his condition, but he made no reply. Beside Galahad sat the queen, and inquired of his country and race; she wist he must be Lancelot's son, but because she would fain have heard it from his own lips, she inquired who his father might be; when he said he knew not, she answered that he came from the best of knights, whom he resembled so closely that none could miss the truth. The twain conversed until darkness came on; when it was time to be bedded, the king conducted Galahad to his own chamber, and placed him in the couch where he himself was accustomed to lie; after that, he retired to rest, with Lancelot and the

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other barons. That night, the king slept little, for he was grieved for the sake of the knights whom he was soon to lose.

¶ When it pleased Our Lord that past were the shadows of the night, the lords rose and arrayed themselves, and the king did the like. After he had been apparelled, he came to the chamber where lay Gawain and Lancelot, and found them ready for mass. The king, who loved them as his own children, saluted them, and they rose to their feet, in order to receive him. Arthur blamed Gawain, and said that he would fain put an end to the quest; but his nephew answered, that without disloyalty it might not be. The king returned, that he knew it well, but his love had caused him to speak. With that, the queen entered, and said: "Sir, your knights await you, to hear mass;" and the king wiped away his tears, that none might perceive his regret. Sir Gawain called for his arms, and Lancelot did the same; when they were arrayed, saving their shields, they came to the palace, and found their companions in readiness; after they had repaired to the church, and listened to the service, the companions of the quest returned to the hall and took their seats.

¶ Then said Sir Bademagus: "Since this business hath been undertaken in such fashion

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that it may not be abandoned, I advise that the saints be brought in, and the comrades swear the vow that belongeth to the quest." "So be it," answered the king, "since otherwise it may not be." Accordingly, the clergy brought the saints, on whom were sworn the oaths of the court; when these had been carried before the king, he summoned Sir Gawain, and said: "Sir, you were the first to embrace the quest; advance, and take the oath, which ought to be sworn by such as engage in that task." "Sir," cried the King Bademagus, "saving your grace, not so. Let him be first to swear, whom needs must we account the lord of the Round Table, Sir Galahad, and we will come after." Therefore Galahad was summoned; he advanced and swore, kneeling before the saints, that as loyal knight, this quest would he maintain for a year and a day, and longer if need be, nor would he ever return to court, until he had learned the truth in regard to the Holy Grail, if in any manner it might be discovered. Next to him, swore Sir Lancelot, followed by Gawain, Perceval, and Bors, and the other knights of the Round Table, to the number of an hundred and fifty. After they had dined, they put on their helmets, and with prayer and tears commended the queen to God. When she

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saw them equipped, she went to her chamber, sorrowing as if her friends were dead. After Lancelot had taken arms, he resorted to her chamber, in order to take leave; and she cried, that not with her consent did he go, but since so must be, she commended him to the keeping of that God who resigned himself to suffer on the cross, and she prayed, that he might be safely guided whithersoever he roved.

¶ Lancelot went down to the castle-court, where he found his comrades already in the saddle. The king would have had Galahad take a shield; but he declared, that he would carry none, save such as fortune might send. The barons rode down to the city, that they might issue by the gate; never was seen such grief as when the burghers saw them go; but they bore themselves as if it were naught. They pursued their way, making merry, until they reached the forest, on the road to the castle of Vagan. Here at a cross they halted, and Sir Gawain said to the king, that he should convey them no further. Gawain doffed his helm, and his companions did the like; the king kissed him and his mates. After they had laced their helmets, they commended one another to God; the king returned to Camelot, while the knights entered the wood, and rode to the castle.

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¶ This Vagan was a worthy knight; when he saw the companions passing through his castle, he closed his gates, and declared, that since God had put into his power folk of such worth, they should not depart until he had done them honor. As if perforce, he detained them, and served them so abundantly, that they wist not whence such plenty came. They took counsel, and determined that on the morrow every man should take his separate path; therefore, when day dawned, the companions took their arms, and went to hear mass in a chapel of the castle. After the service, they mounted, commending to God the lord of the castle, on account of the honor he had shown them. As they had resolved,

they separated, and threw themselves
into the forest, in different directions,
while the stoutest hearts
wept at parting.

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The White Shield

AFTER Galahad had quitted his comrades, for four days he rode without adventure; on the fifth, at the hour of vespers, he came to an abbey of White Monks. He knocked at the gate, and the friars opened; when they saw that it was a knight errant, they received him with joy; some took his steed, and others guided him to a hall, on the level of the ground. After he had been disarmed, he recognized King Bademagus, and another companion of the Round Table. When these knew him, they embraced him, and he made much of them, as friends and brothers.

¶ After supper, while they sat under a tree in an orchard, Galahad asked the knights what had brought them. They answered, that they had heard of a shield, which was kept in that abbey, and which had this property, that if any man hung it from his neck, within two days he would be slain or maimed; and that they had come to see if the tale were true. Galahad declared that if the shield were such as they affirmed, and if they could not carry it, it would be useful for himself, for he had none; and they said, if he wished, they would leave to him the adventure, for they knew he

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would not fail. "Nay," he returned, "do you try to prove if it be so," and to this they agreed. That night the companions were served with all in the house, and the brethren did honor to Galahad, when they heard the testimony which his associates bore him. On the morrow, after mass, Bademagus asked one of the friars where was kept the shield of which such wonders were related. "Sir," he replied, "why do you inquire? I advise you not to take it, for I think you will gain nothing but disgrace." "At least, I wish to know its fashion." The brother led the knights behind the main altar, where lay a shield marked with a red cross. "Sir," he said, "behold the shield whereof you speak." The knights eyed the shield, and thought it the fairest they had ever seen; it diffused an odor, as if it had been covered with all spices. The other knight said that he was unworthy to bear it; but Bademagus declared, that he would take it with him, come what might. He hung it from his neck, and bore it from the monastery, saying to Galahad: "Sir, if you will, wait here until you learn what cometh of my carrying this shield." Galahad promised to abide the issue, and the brethren gave Bademagus a squire to attend him, and bring back the shield, if it should be necessary.

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℄ King Bademagus rode with the squire, two leagues and more, until he arrived at a hermitage in a deep valley. From the chapel issued a knight in white arms, who charged him as fast as his horse could gallop. Bademagus levelled his lance, and met the knight; his spear flew in pieces, while the white knight smote him so hard that he pierced his hauberk, and wounded him in the left shoulder; he took the shield, and said: "Sir knight, 't was folly to bear this shield, which none may carry, save the best of knights; because of your sin hath Our Lord sent me, that the penalty may correspond to the offence." So speaking, the white knight turned to the squire, and said: "Go, carry this shield to the servant of Jesus Christ, the true knight Galahad, whom thou hast left in the abbey. Tell him that the Master on high biddeth him use it, and that every day it will be found fresh and new. Therefore ought he to prize it, and so inform him." The squire demanded: "Sir, how may I name you, when I see him?" "My name thou shalt not know, for it may not be uttered; what I bid thee, do." "Sir, since you refuse to tell your name, for the sake of what you best love, relate what is the virtue of this shield, and why such wonders have befallen in this land; for no man hath borne it, whom it

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hath not hurt." "Since thou hast conjured me, I will tell, yet not to thee alone, until thou bring the knight who shall possess the shield." "Sir, when we come, in what place may you be found?" "Here," he answered, "where we now stand." The squire went to Bademagus, and asked if he were injured; he said: "Aye, mortally." The squire helped him mount, and sustained him, for otherwise he would have fallen from the saddle; in this manner they came to the abbey; and when the friars knew, they assisted Bademagus from his horse, and brought him to a chamber, where he was cared for. Galahad inquired if he would recover, and a friar replied, that he was sore hurt, but would escape with life.

¶ In the hearing of the brethren, the squire cried to Galahad: "Sir, the knight in white arms saluteth you, the same who has wounded this knight; he biddeth you carry the shield, on the part of the heavenly Master, for he saith no other knight may possess it; if you would learn wherefore these adventures have befallen, he will tell you, if you will go find him." When the friars heard, they humbled themselves before Galahad, saying that good fortune had guided him. Galahad answered, that he would bear the shield, since it had been sent; his arms were brought, and he sus-

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pended the shield about his neck, commending the brethren to God; the other knight wished to accompany him, but he said it might not be.

¶ Galahad and the squire rode until they met the white knight, who came forward and saluted him; Galahad asked why so many adventures had happened on account of the shield. The knight replied, that he would relate the story, for he knew it well; and he recited: —

¶ "Galahad, two and forty years after the Passion of Our Lord, it befell that Joseph of Arimathæa, the gentle knight who took down Our Lord from the cross, departed from the city of Jerusalem with a great part of his kin. By the commandment of Our Lord, they wandered, until in the city of Sarras they found Evelac the Saracen, who reigned in the day that Joseph arrived. It so chanced that the king was at war with his enemy Tholomes, who demanded his land; when Josephes, son of Joseph knew, he told the king that he would suffer defeat if he went to battle as he then was. Evelac asked for advice, and Josephes expounded the New Law, and the truth of the Evangel. He made a shield, covered with a cross of red sendal, and foretold to Evelac, that during three days and nights his enemy should have him at advantage; when

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he thought it impossible to escape, he bade him uncover the shield, and beseech God, whose emblem he bore, to save him, in order that he might accept his faith. It turned out according to the prophecy, and when Evelac saw no other hope of safety, he bared the shield. In its centre, he saw a man crucified and bleeding, and recited the words Josephes had taught him; by these he was redeemed from the hands of his foe, and gained the victory over Tholomes and his host. When he returned to Sarras, he informed his people that Josephes had spoken truth, and received baptism, with Nascien his son-in-law. From that day, Evelac reverenced Our Lord, and with honor kept the shield. After a time it befell, that Josephes and his father parted from Sarras, and came to Great Britain, where they were imprisoned, together with many other Christians, by a cruel and wicked king; when Evelac knew, he summoned his friends, and with Nascien went to Britain, where he defeated the folk of the country, so that Christendom was exalted in the land. Evelac and his people loved Josephes so much, that they would not return to their own country, but remained to keep him company; and when Josephes lay on his deathbed, Evelac came to him, weeping tenderly, and implored him

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to leave some token by which he might be remembered. Josephes bade Evelac fetch the shield, which he had carried in battle; and when it was brought, with his blood signed that cross you behold, declaring that daily should it be found red and fresh, and that no man might use it with safety, until should appear that heir of Nascien's line, for whom it had been destined by God. The king demanded in what place should the shield be left, in order that hereafter it might fall into the hands of the good knight; and Josephes bade it be placed in the abbey which Nascien had chosen for his burial, whither the knight should come on the fifth day after he had received the order of chivalry. As he spoke, so hath it chanced, for hither have you ridden on the fifth day."

¶ Thus related the White Knight; when the squire heard, he dismounted, and threw himself at Galahad's feet, begging that he would take him for a comrade, and would dub him a knight. Galahad replied, that he would have no companion; but when he saw the youth's tears, he relented, and granted his suit. The squire proposed that they should return to the abbey, where they would find arms and horses, and so was done. Galahad knighted the squire, and after that, the two departed

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from the abbey, and roved together during a week. Upon a Monday they came to a wooden cross, where they separated, one taking the road which led to the right, and the other that to the left.

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Lancelot before the Grail

ON a day it befell, that in the Waste Forest, Galahad met Lancelot and Perceval, who did not know his shield. Lancelot was first to make the attack, and broke his lance on Galahad's breast, but in return received such a stroke, that he went down, horse and man. After that, Galahad drew his sword, and fought with Perceval, whom he stunned with a blow that cleft cap and helm; the joust took place near a manor, where dwelt a recluse. When the latter saw Galahad, she said: "Sir knight, proceed under the guidance of God; had these knights known you as well as I, they would not have been so bold." When Galahad heard her, he feared to be discovered, and set off at speed; the others pursued as fast as they could, but were unable to overtake him. Lancelot and Perceval remained in the forest, and the latter wished to return by the road, but the former declared that he would follow the knight who carried the red shield.

¶ Lancelot traversed the wood, but came to no path; he could find no refuge, for the night was dark. He kept on, until he arrived at a cross, and saw a stone with letters, which he could not make out. Near at hand he per-

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ceived a chapel, and turned that way, hoping to find some inmate; at the entrance was an iron grating, that barred the passage; within, he saw an altar covered with a silken cloth, whereon stood a candlestick of seven branches, in which candles brightly burned. Vexed that he could not enter, he went back to his steed, and led him to the cross, removing saddle and bridle, that he might feed freely; Lancelot unlaced his helm, laid it beside him, and reclined beside the cross, but could not forget the good knight who had carried the white shield.

¶ At last, he saw approach a knight on a litter, borne on two palfreys; the knight groaned, as if in pain, and gazed on Lancelot, but said naught, for he thought him asleep; Lancelot never opened his lips, but lay between sleeping and waking. At the cross, the palfreys halted, and the knight exclaimed: "God have mercy, when will come the holy vessel, whereby shall be allayed the sharpness of this pain? Never for a petty fault hath any man suffered so much!" Thus he lamented, bewailing his state; Lancelot looked, and saw the candlestick leave the chapel, and proceed to the cross, with no bearer; after the candles came the Holy Grail, which he had seen in Camelot. When the sick man beheld, he folded his hands and prayed: "Fair Lord God, who

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in this land by the power of thy holy vessel hast performed so many miracles, look favorably on me, that my pain may be quelled, and that I may enter on the quest which the other lords have undertaken." With that, he dragged himself to the table whereon stood the vessel, and pressed his lips to the stone on which it rested. Forthwith, he felt himself healed, and cried: "Ha, God, I am cured!" Presently, the candlestick returned to the chapel, in such manner that Lancelot could not tell how it went or came. Yet, because of his weariness, or on account of the sin wherein he was overtaken, he made no movement.

¶ After the Holy Grail had quitted the cross, the knight rose, sound and well. In a little while, came a squire with armor. He saw his master standing erect, and asked what had befallen; the knight answered: "God's mercy, I am healed, since I have been visited by the Holy Grail; but I marvelled at this knight, that he rose not when it appeared." The squire answered, that it must be a man in mortal sin; and his lord returned, that he was unfortunate, be he who he might; yet he took him to be one of the companions of the Table Round. With that, the squire gave his master the hauberk he had brought, together with Lancelot's sword and helm; he took Lance-

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lot's horse, which he saddled and bridled, saying: "Sir, mount, for on yourself will better be bestowed this steed and arms, than on the evil knight who lieth yonder." The knight drew the sword, and wondered at its beauty; when he had mounted, he raised his hand to heaven, and swore, that if it were the will of God and the saints, never would he cease to rove, until he had learned why the Holy Grail everywhere appeared in the realm of Loegria.

¶ The knight and the squire departed, and Lancelot rose, as one who wotteth not whether what he hath seen be truth or dream. He saw the candlestick before the altar, but not what he most longed to behold, the Holy Grail, whereof he desired true tidings. For a long time he stood before the bars of the chapel, and gazed, until he heard a voice which said: "Lancelot, harder than stone, bitterer than wood, more despicable than the barren fig-tree, how durst thou enter the place where appeareth the Holy Grail?" When he returned to the cross, he found neither helmet, sword, nor steed, and wist that his vision had been real. He grieved and cursed himself, for he knew that he would never ascertain the truth of the Holy Grail.

¶ When fair and bright shone the day, when birds began to make mirth in the forest and

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sunlight to shine through the trees, and Lancelot found himself unfurnished of horse and arms, he thought he could find nothing that would restore his joy. He parted from the chapel, and on foot threw himself into the wood; he came on a path, and followed it, until he reached a clearing, where stood a chapel, in which a hermit was saying mass. He knelt before the chancel, crying *meâ culpâ*, and beseeching mercy of Our Lord; he listened to the mass, that the holy man and his clerk chanted; and when the hermit had finished his song, and divested himself of the armor of Our Lord, Lancelot accosted him, and in God's name implored his counsel.

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The Sword with the Strange Hangings

FOR many a day Galahad roved, and achieved many a fair adventure, that the story mentioneth not. He came to a castle, where was in progress a great tourney, and the side of the town had the worst, for the party of the field contained the better knights. When Galahad saw that the former were at a disadvantage, he put himself on their side, and accomplished such wonders, that folk cried out, it was folly to cope with the red-cross knight, whose sword no armor could resist. After the victory had been won, he parted so secretly, that none knew whither he had gone, and pursued his way, until he came to a hermitage. When he saw that the night had fallen, he dismounted and knocked; the hermit opened the door, and when he saw that it was a knight errant, made him welcome, and bestowed on him such charity as God had enabled him to grant. After the two had laid down on their grass couches, arrived a damsel, who knocked, and demanded Galahad; and when the holy man went to the door, she said that she desired to speak with the good knight, whose aid she sorely needed.

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The hermit called Galahad, who rose, and asked what she wished; the damsel bade him take arms, and ride in her company. He commended the hermit to God, and in haste they departed.

¶ On the morrow, at daybreak, they entered a forest, extending to the sea; by vespers, after riding all day, without finding any place where they could get food, they came to a castle in a valley. When the folk of the castle set eyes on the damsel, they said: "Welcome, my lady!" and she bade them do honor to the knight, who was the worthiest man that ever had quitted the kingdom of Loegria. They took meat, and returned to rest; before the end of the first sleep, the damsel came to Galahad, and bade him rise; the people brought torches, that he might array himself, and they mounted. The maid took a rich coffer, and set it in front; all that night they proceeded at speed, and reached the seacoast, where in a ship they found Perceval and Bors; they entered, and the vessel set sail, so fast, that presently they were out of sight of land. At nones, when they were fourteen days' distance from shore, they perceived a second ship, and the damsel said, here was the adventure for which Our Lord had brought them together.

¶ The companions left the ship, and found

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the second vessel richer than that in which they had arrived; on the side were letters, declaring: "Thou who hast mind to enter, whoever thou mayest be, have a care that thou art full of faith." When they had perused the writing, the maiden asked Perceval, if he knew her; and he answered, that he wist not ever to have seen her. "Know," she said, "that I am your sister, daughter of King Pellehem; and I command you, as the thing on earth dearest to me, not to enter this ship, unless you have perfect faith in Christ, for sure am I that otherwise you would perish." Perceval answered that he believed, and she bade him proceed. The vessel was covered with a canopy, underneath which they saw a bed, richly furnished; at the head was a golden crown, and at the foot a sword, partly bare; on the hilt was written, that the weapon could be drawn only by one man, the best of his line. The scabbard was of serpent's-skin, rose-red, but the hangings hempen; on the sheath, in silver letters, was written that these could not be changed, unless by a virgin; when he had read, Perceval declared that they must go in quest of the maid who should change the hangings of the sword.

¶ The damsel bade the knights be at ease, for the task should be performed before they quit-

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ted the place; she opened her coffer, and took thence cords of hair, so shining, that scarce could it be distinguished from the threads of gold with which it was twined. "Sir," she cried, "behold the hangings you see, and know that these have I made from the thing that on earth I most prized, the tresses of my hair." "Sir," to Galahad she said, "on the Whitsunday when you were knighted, I had the fairest locks that ever lady possessed; so soon as I was assured that this charge was destined for me, I caused them to be shorn, and made the strands you behold." Bors replied, that in God's name should she be welcome, for she had saved them from great trouble; she went to the sword, and removed the hempen hangings, adding others as fair, as if she had spent her life in the working. After that, her companions bade her name the weapon; and she said it should be called the Sword of Strange Hangings. His comrades told Galahad to take the sword; he drew it, and returned it to its sheath; the damsel took from him the one he had brought, and girt about him the sword, saying: "I reck not how soon I die, since I have made the worthiest of knights, for such you were not, until girt with this brand." "Damsel," he responded, "so much have you accomplished, that evermore shall I be your knight."

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¶ With that, they returned in the ship that had brought them; of Perceval's sister it is said that she gave part of her blood for the healing of a leprous lady, and perished of the loss; and that before she passed away, she charged her brother to set her on board the vessel, and to bury her at Sarras, in the Spiritual Palace, whither she should be borne. The knights pursued their journey, until they came to a forest, and went their several ways.

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Corbenic

AFTER a time it happened that Galahad and Perceval again came together, and during five years wandered in company, accomplishing the adventures of Britain. At the end of that time, as they emerged from a forest, they fell in with Bors, and inquired of his estate. He replied, that since they had parted, never had he passed four nights in the same bed, nor tarried in any house inhabited by men, but roved in wildernesses, where a hundred times had he died, had it not been for the mercy of God. Perceval asked, whether he had found that of which they were in quest; and Bors responded, not so, but he trusted they should never again separate, until they had accomplished the purpose for which they had set out.

¶ Thus fortune, which had divided them, united the three comrades, who roved until they arrived at Corbenic, the castle of the Fisher King. When Pelles recognized them, he welcomed them with joy, for he knew that by their means would be achieved the adventures of the Grail, which had lasted so long. The tidings went abroad, and the folk of the castle wept over Galahad, whom they had not seen since he had been a little child. The

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king's son fetched the pieces of the broken sword, which Galahad joined so perfectly that the place could not be told. When the people perceived that the weapon had been mended, they were full of delight, and bestowed the sword on Bors, for they said he deserved it, as a knight hardy and brave.

¶ When it came to vespers, the day darkened, while a mighty wind smote the palace, so hot that men swooned, in terror lest they should be consumed; presently they heard a voice saying: "They who must not be seated at Christ's table, let them go hence, for the true knights shall now be nourished with the bread of heaven." At these words, all quitted the hall, save the three comrades, with King Pelles and his son, and a niece of the king, a holy maid. After a while, entered nine armed knights, who said to Galahad that they longed to sit at the table, where should be parted the body of the Master on high. Galahad answered, that they had come seasonably, for he himself and his mates had but lately arrived. The knights took their places in mid-hall, and he demanded whence they came; they replied, that three were from Gaul, three from Denmark, and three from Ireland.

¶ As they conversed, from a chamber issued a bed, borne by four damsels, on which lay a

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man wearing a golden crown, who seemed ill at ease. The bearers set him down, and went their way; he raised his head, and cried to Galahad, that in pain and grief had he awaited his advent; but if it were the will of God, now should his anguish be allayed, and he himself depart from the world, as had been promised long ago. With that, was heard a voice saying: "Whoso is not a companion of the Quest, let him go hence, for 't is not right that he remain." Accordingly, with his son and niece, Pelles left the hall; when the palace was empty of other folk, from heaven the companions saw descend four angels, bearing in a stately chair a man arrayed like a bishop, with crozier and mitre; the chair they placed before the silver table, on which rested the Holy Grail. On the forehead of the man was written: "Behold Joseph of Arimathæa, the first Christian bishop, whom Our Lord consecrated in Sarras, in the Spiritual Palace." The knights stood, amazed, for they wist it was the same Joseph who had parted from the world four hundred years earlier. Joseph observed their wonder, and bade them not be dismayed, for he was now celestial, as erst he had been terrestrial; thus speaking, he threw himself before the table on hands and knees.

℄ Presently, the knights heard open the door

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of a chamber, whence issued the same angels who had conveyed Joseph; two held burning candles, the third a napkin of red samite, and the fourth a lance, whence flowed drops of blood, that were received in a box he carried in the other hand. The bearers set the candles on the table, and deposited the napkin beside the holy vessel; Joseph rose, and took the lance, which he placed above the vessel, in such manner that the blood fell into the Grail, which he covered with the napkin.

¶ Joseph proceeded as doth the priest in the sacrament of the mass; from the holy vessel he took a wafer, and when he came to the elevation of the Host, from on high descended a form like a child's, with fiery face, and smote itself into the bread. After Joseph had finished the service, he kissed Galahad, and bade him in like manner salute his brethren, saying: "Servants of Christ, you who have toiled to behold the marvels of the Holy Grail, seat yourselves at this table, and be fed with the loftiest food, from the hand of Our Lord."

¶ At these words, Joseph vanished, in such manner that they knew not whither he had gone; with tears, the companions took their places, and saw issue from the holy vessel one with bleeding hands and feet, who said: "My knights, my servants, you who in this mortal

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life have become spiritual, you have sought me so long that I may conceal myself no more. So much have you accomplished, that you are seated at my table, where since the time of Joseph of Arimathæa hath never man eaten. Other favors have my servants received, for the knights of this castle, and many beside, have been fed from the grace of the holy vessel, but not after the same manner. Advance, and partake of the high food that you have desired so long." Thus Galahad received his Saviour, and it was revealed to him, that the vessel was that dish wherein Jesus at the Passover partook of the Paschal lamb; and that hereafter his desire should be granted more openly, in the city of Sarras, whither he should accompany the holy vessel, which on that same night would depart from the kingdom of Loegria, where it was insufficiently honored; with that, the vision blessed them, and ascended, how they knew not.

¶ Forthwith, Galahad wet his finger with the blood that dripped from the lance, and therewith anointed the wounds of the Fisher King, who rose sound and well, and returned thanks to Our Lord; he lived afterward, but not in the world, for he entered an abbey of White Monks.

¶ At midnight, after Galahad had prayed Our

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Lord to guide himself and his comrades in safety of their souls, he heard a voice which bade them go whither fortune should lead them; accordingly, they descended from the hall, and in the courtyard found arms and steeds; without the gate, they met two companions of the Round Table, by whom they sent word to Lancelot, and to the knights of King Arthur. They rode, until in four days they came to the sea, where they found the ship in which they had discovered the Sword of Strange Hangings; on the bed beneath the canopy, standing on the silver table, they saw the Grail covered with the red napkin. The wind smote the sail, and bore them into the deep sea, where they drifted, whither they knew not, until they came in sight of Sarras; as they had been bidden, they took the table and the Grail, and bore them to the city.

¶ When the king perceived the three companions, he demanded who they were, and what they were carrying, and they told the truth; being heathen and cruel, he disbelieved, and shut them up in prison, where they were visited and nourished by the Holy Grail.

¶ After a year, King Escorant died, and the folk of the city were in despair, for they knew not who should reign over them. While they were debating, they heard a voice from heaven,

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which bade them choose the youngest of the three companions, who would govern them well; accordingly, they seized Galahad, and made him king, lief or loth.

℄ At the end of the year, on the day of Galahad's coronation, he and his comrade rose early, and proceeded to the Spiritual Palace. As they gazed at the holy vessel, they beheld a man like a bishop, surrounded by angels, who celebrated mass; when he came to the elevation of the Host, he called Galahad, and said: "Servant of Christ, advance, for now shalt thou behold what so long thou hast desired to see." While Galahad looked, he trembled; and as his mortal flesh began to perceive the spiritual things, he prayed, that while he was in that joy he might be allowed to enter the celestial life. The bishop took the Host, and offered it to Galahad, telling him that he was Josephes, son of Joseph, a virgin like himself. At these words, Galahad kissed Perceval and Bors, bidding the latter in his name salute Lancelot his father; with that, he knelt at the table, and presently fell forward, while angels received his soul. The two comrades saw descend a hand, that carried upward the vessel and the lance; and from that day was no man so bold as to affirm that he had looked on the Holy Grail.

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The Maid of Escalot

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The Maid of Escalot

AFTER the Quest of the Holy Grail had come to an end, and the knights of the Round Table had accomplished their adventures, and put down all their foes, during four years they dwelt in safety and peace. At the end of that time, the queen said to the king, as in a chamber they lay: "Sir, your court beginneth to lose its noble knights, and to fade your blooming honor, that erst spread wide through the world." "Lady, what remedy?" "Sir, proclaim a tournament, that it may be noised abroad, and your court not cease, but continue in honor and pride." The king said so should be, and summoned a tourney at Winchester; the challenger was young Galehaut, with sturdy knights, that ladies might judge who bore himself well, and deserved the prize of valor. The news was told, and knights armed themselves, with broad shields and brown helms, to win praise and renown.

¶ For the queen's sake, Lancelot made occasion to stay, as if he had been sick; after the king had departed, he went to her chamber, and knelt down, saluting that bright lady. "Lancelot," she said, "what dost thou with me? I dread lest be discovered the love that

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is between us; at home is Sir Agravain, who watcheth night and day." "Nay, not so, my lady free; I come to take leave, ere from court I go." "Aye, arm thyself speedily, for I love not thy stay."

℄ Lancelot repaired to his chamber, and dight himself in gay weeds, whence the arms had been shorn; sword and shield he took that had served him in many battles, and mounted the gray steed King Arthur had given; highways he shunned, and on bypaths rode, night and day, toward the fair city of Winchester, where the tournament was to be.

℄ King Arthur lay in a castle, on the road to Winchester; as he gazed from the tower, beneath he saw a knight, who did not blow bugle, or make display, but stooped over his saddle, as if he were old. The king asked Sir Ewain, if he knew the knight; and Sir Ewain replied, that it was some old knight, who had come to see the young knights ride. They watched him a while, for the steed's sake; the horse stumbled at a stone, and the knight took up the bridle; as he straightened himself in the saddle, they recognized Lancelot. King Arthur said, that for beauty and bounty was Lancelot the best of knights, and since he wished not to be known, they would leave him his way; but Sir Ewain responded, that

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he would be known by his horse, and by the feats of arms he would perform.

¶ Not far dwelt an earl, called the Lord of Escalot; thither Lancelot rode, and begged lodging for the night. They received him with honor, and made a fair supper; as they sat at table, Lancelot asked the earl: "Sir, is there here any bachelor, who meaneth to attend the tourney?" "Sir, I have two sons, and one is sick; I would his brother might go, had he any mate." "Sir, I will wait for him, and help him with might and main, so that he shall come to no harm." "Sir, a gentle knight is easy to tell; to-morrow, after you have dined, together shall you ride." "Sir, one prayer I make; if here be any arms, let me borrow them for this deed." "Sir, since my son lieth ill, take his arms and horse; you will be thought my sons, for both will wear red."

¶ The earl had a fair daughter, red as blossom on brier; on Lancelot she gazed, and joyed to sit near the noble knight; she set on him her heart, till she could not keep back the tears. Arose that silent maid, and went to her room, where she threw herself down, weeping as if her heart would break. Lancelot wist what was in her mind, by others before; he called her brother, and they went to her chamber; he seated himself by her side,

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and spake courteous words, to comfort that fair maid. She took him in her arms, and cried: "Sir, unless yourself, no physician may save my life." "Lady, grieve not for me, my heart is not at mine own will, 't is bestowed elsewhere; yet naught shall prevent me, openly and in secret, from being thy knight; again we may meet, when thou mayest better speak thy mind." "Sir, as thou art a knight hardy and free, prithee wear in the tournament some token of mine." "Lady, cut off thy sleeve, I will wear it for thy love; the like did I never before, for the sake of any lady, save for her, who hath loved me best."

¶ On the morrow, when it was day, they dined and made ready, and went their way together, like brothers indeed. On the road they met a squire, who came from the tournament, and asked if he knew, which party was the stronger. The squire replied, that Sir Galehaut had most men, but the king the greater force, for on his side were the best knights, Ewain, Bors, and Lionel. The earl's son said: "Sir, let us unite with these." Lancelot answered: "Among men so worthy, how might we speed? If we helped the weaker, it would be more to our credit, if we performed any brave deed. To-night let us lodge without the walls, for in the castle great is the throng." "Sir, near at hand

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dwelleth mine aunt, a lady of great beauty; if it were your will, she would be glad of your visit." They fared to the castle of the bright lady, who was blithe of her guests; their supper was made, richly provided with meat and drink, and on the morrow, after they had dined, they went their way.

¶ When they came to the field, the sport had begun; they paused and gazed, to see Arthur's knights ride. Galehaut's men began to yield, for the knights were unhorsed, one after one; Lancelot covered himself, for he thought it was time to help. That way galloped Sir Ewain, fierce as a wild bear; in his red arms, Lancelot charged him, and dealt such a blow, that Sir Ewain was unhorsed, and men thought him slain. Sir Bors came galloping like mad; Lancelot smote him so hard, that he took the nearest way to earth. Lionel was wroth, and addressed himself with a keen heart; but he was struck through helmet to crown, so that the scar was forever seen. Knights gathered, and took counsel, saying that such a knight had never been known, save Lancelot of the Lake; but because of the sleeve on his helm, they did not take him for Lancelot, for they knew that he wore the favor of no lady, unless it were the queen's. Hector exclaimed, that the knight did not belong to Escalot, and that

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he would make trial of his worth; he chose a noble steed, and it was no child's play between them; in the middle of the press, Hector encountered Lancelot, and smote him through helmet to crown, so that his pride was well nigh marred; but Hector went down, man and horse.

¶ Lancelot left the field, blinded by the streaming blood; with the earl's son, he rode to a forest, high and hoar; when they were alone, he doffed his helm, and the earl's son declared that it was a grievous wound. "Nay, not so, but I would we were at rest." "Sir, if you would ride to mine aunt's, where we spent the night, she would send for physicians, to heal your wounds, and I myself would attend you, to be your servant and knight." They took their way to the castle of the gentle lady, who called leeches, from far and near; by the morrow, when it was day, Lancelot could not turn in bed, but lay sick to death.

¶ King Arthur called his knights, and said, that for a month he would lie in Winchester, and proclaim another tourney; the knight would not be far, for he had been sore hurt. Letters were written, and heralds carried them through England, to such as were worthy, until it befell, that a herald took meat at the castle where Lancelot lay, and spake of the

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tournament on the Sunday to come. When he heard, Lancelot sighed, and exclaimed, that it was for him the tourney was held, and go he would, although he died the same day. The leech cried: "Sir, what folly is this? By Him who wrought the world, no man under moon could save your life, to the time you were set on your steed!" "In my bed I will not lie; I had rather suffer what I may, than perish like a coward here." The physician was wroth, and quitted him; Lancelot grieved so bitterly, that his wounds opened, and the lady of the castle wept, for she thought he would die; but the earl's son went after the leech, and brought him back, promising mighty gifts; the physician staunched the blood, and bade Lancelot be of good hope.

¶ On the morrow, when it was day, the herald went swiftly on his way, and the self-same night came to Winchester; he saluted the king, and Sir Ewain who sat by, and related what he had seen, saying, that nothing astonished him more than a mad knight, who could not have lifted his head from the pillow, to win the bliss of the world, and yet grieved until his wounds opened, because he was unable to ride. Sir Ewain cried to the king: "Certes, no coward knight is yon! Would he were sound! I wis, 't is the man who hath unhorsed

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us all; best let the tourney be, since he cannot come." The tournament was no more, and each went his separate way. King Arthur rode to Camelot, where tarried the queen, and thought to have found Lancelot, but he was not there.

¶ Meantime Lancelot lay wounded, while knights sought him far and wide. In the castle where he tarried, the earl's son attended him night and day; and when he could take horse, the earl himself brought him home, and kept him at Escalot, with great honor.

¶ Bors and Lionel took oath, that never would they return to court, until they had learned where Lancelot was to be found. Hector went with them in quest of his brother; far and near they searched, until on a day it befell, that they came to take meat at the castle where Lancelot lodged. When they saw him taking pleasure on the wall, they fell on their knees for joy; it was a merry meeting, when Lancelot looked on the faces of the three whom most he loved. He led them into the castle, where the earl was glad of his guests; boards were set and cloths spread; the earl's daughter and Lancelot were seated side by side, while the earl's son stood and served. Bors, who thought Lancelot's wound grievous, inquired: "Sir, if it be no secret, tell me, where

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wast thou hurt?" "By Him who wrought the world, it shall be dear bought, if ever I meet the man." Hector changed color, for he liked not the words, while Bors cried: "Hector, well mayest thou be sad, for 't is no coward knight who menaceth thee here." "Hector, wast thou who didst wound me?" "Lord, I knew not it was thyself; thou gavest me a blow, Sir Lionel swore, that the mark would always be seen." Lancelot laughed with a free heart, to see Hector's pain: "Brother, have no fear, I shall soon be sound; I shall blame thee never, but love thee more dearly, that such dints canst thou deal."

¶ On the third day, the knights took leave, that they might repair to court. Lancelot said: "Pray you, salute my lord, tell my lady how I fare, and say I will come when I can; bid her not be wistful." The knights went to Camelot, where the king lay; they had room to do their errand, for the king was in the forest, hunting with his knights; they knelt before the queen, and said: "We have seen Lancelot, and tarried with him three days; he lieth sick, for he hath been sorely hurt; he saith, you shall see him soon; he biddeth you not be wistful." The queen laughed with free heart: "Worthy God, well for me! Why not tell my lord?" The knights rode to the for-

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est, to let the king know; he gave thanks to Jesu, never had he been so blithe; he called Sir Gawain, and cried: "'T was Lancelot who bore the red arms; he liveth, well for me!" Out of his courtesy, Gawain replied: "Never came news so glad; I long to look on Lancelot." He took leave of the king, with the queen and all the court; he arrayed himself in gay weeds, and to Escalot he rode, halting neither night nor day.

℄ By this time Lancelot was healed; he dight himself, and took leave, while the maid wept for sorrow and care: "Sir, if it be your will, leave me somewhat to look on, while in longing I dwell." "I will leave thee mine armor, and go in thy brother's; be not anxious, for it will not be long ere I come or send." He made ready, and went his way; after he had departed, arrived Sir Gawain, and inquired after the knight; they answered, 't was no secret, he was a fortnight forth.

℄ Sir Gawain took the maid, and sat beside that sweet thing; he spoke of Lancelot of the Lake, how the world did not contain such another knight. She replied that she had given him her love: "He hath taken me for his lover; I may show you his armor." "Now damsel, I am glad 't is so; such a lover as thou hast the world owneth no second; no

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lady so cruel and cold, though her heart were of steel or stone, that could deny him her love; but damsel, I beseech thee, show me his shield; if it be Lancelot's, by the color I shall know." She led him to a chamber, and drew forth the arms; gently he said: "Lady, no secret, 't is Lancelot's shield; damsel, I am blithe that he will take thee for his lover, and I myself, with all my power, will be thy knight, for his sake."

¶ On the morrow, when it was day, Sir Gawain took leave of earl and knight, and of the bright maiden; he rode straight to court, for he wist not where Lancelot was to be found; the king and his knights made much of him, for he was aye gentle and kind.

¶ On a time it befell, that the king spake with the queen, while Sir Gawain was by; they grieved over the absence of Lancelot, and King Arthur said: "Indeed, if he lived, he would not tarry so long." Sir Gawain answered swiftly: "Methinketh, no wonder; the fairest of ladies hath chosen him for her lover; not one of us but would be blithe, such beauty to behold." The king was pleased, and asked the name of the maid. "The earl's daughter of Escalot; there was I rejoiced; she showed me his shield." The queen said naught, but repaired to her chamber, where

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she threw herself down, weeping as if she would go out of her mind: "Alas, woe is me! I have lost the best knight, that ever bestrode steed!" Her ladies comforted her, and bade her let no man see; to bed they brought the bright lady, who wept as if she were wild.

¶ On a day it befell, that Sir Lionel and Hector rode to play in the forest, that was flowery and branchèd sweet; on their way, they fell in with Lancelot. No wonder they were glad, beholding their lord; they knelt, and thanked Almighty God; 't was joy to behold the meeting of the noble knights. Lancelot asked: "How fareth my bright lady?" "It is sorrow to see the care she is in; the king is grieved that you come not to the court; he thinketh you lost, and his knights every one. Sir, would you go with us, and speak with the queen, rejoiced would she be, when once she had seen you; they think you dead, you have been away so long." Lancelot promised that he would ride in their troop; the knights were rejoiced, and arrayed themselves with pride; to court they sped, pausing neither night nor day.

¶ King Arthur stood on a high tower, Sir Gawain at his side; when they saw Lancelot, never were men so merry; as fast as they might, they ran to meet him; the king kissed

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him, with knights and swains. The king led Lancelot to a chamber, where knights took him in arms, and seated him on a rich bed, covered with cloth of gold. He told his story, and tarried three days, but spake not with the queen.

¶ On a day it befell, that the king went to hunt in the forest, his knights in his train. Lancelot lay late, for he was minded to visit the queen; he repaired to her chamber, and kissed that bright lady, saluting her with free heart, and all her ladies, who shed tears of joy. "Woe is me," cried the queen, "Lancelot, that ever I saw thee, since the love between us shall thus be divided; alas, Lancelot of the Lake, since my heart is in thy keeping, that thou wilt wed the earl's daughter of Escalot, as men told me. For her sake wilt thou abandon thy bold deeds of arms, and I may wake and weep, until I be cold in clay; but Lancelot, I beseech thee, since needs it must be so, that never mayest thou reveal the love that hath been between us, nor yet cherish her so dear as thine arms to forsake, that I may hear of thy life while I dwell in woe."

¶ Lancelot stood still, his heart torn by grief. "Madam, for cross on rood, what meaneth this moan? By Him who hath bought me with His blood, of these tidings know I naught; by the

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words it seemeth, thou wishest me away; good day, my free lady, thou seest me nevermore." In woeful mood he parted from the queen, and went to the chamber, where lay his attire; with sad heart he donned shining weeds, and sped to the forest, like a spark from a flame. When the news came to hall, the knights ran forth, Bors, Lionel, and Hector; they followed on fleet steeds, blowing horns and shouting; but none might overtake him, as to greenwood he rode.

¶ On a time it befell, that Queen Guinevere, bright as blossom on brier, was seated at meat between Sir Gawain, and a Scottish knight whom dearly she loved; a squire of the court put poison in an apple, to kill Sir Gawain; he set it atop of the fruit, for he thought the queen would give Sir Gawain the best; but she gave it to the Scottish knight, because he came from a foreign land. The knight feared no treason, and a little he ate; he lost might and main, and presently died. Knights wist not what it meant; up started Sir Gawain, with all the court, and drew him over the board; remedies were brought, and the queen strove to save his life, but without avail, for the knight was gone; sad to see was the sorrow of the queen. They could do no more than bury him with grief at a fair chapel, in

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the hollow of a wood; a clerk wrote the legend: "Here lieth the Scottish knight, whom Queen Guinevere with poison slew."

¶ To court came his brother Sir Mador, a knight hardy and brave; on a day it befell, that he roved in the forest, flowery and branchèd sweet; in a hollow of the wood he came on a chapel, and saw a tomb, writ with fair letters; he stood still, and paused to read. Soon as he knew the name, he lost main and might, and fell in a swoon; when he came to himself, he wist not what to do; he stood on no fear, but came to the court, and made a cry against the queen, for his brother's sake.

¶ Though Arthur was king of the realm, against the law he could not go; he took a day to find a man who should do battle for the queen, with sword and shield; the king and Sir Mador held up their hands, and plighted their faith.

¶ On the morrow, the king asked Sir Gawain, what for the queen's sake was best to do; as they stood in a tower, beneath which a river flowed, they saw descend the fairest sail that ever was made. King Arthur wondered at the splendor of the bark, for it was vaulted with a canopy shining like gold. They descended from the tower, the king and Sir Gawain; when they arrived at the bank, the

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boat had come to land; Sir Gawain lifted the canopy, and entered the barge. In the middle was a bed fit for a king, covered with a cloth; the coverlet they raised, and found a dead lady, the fairest of maids. To Sir Gawain said King Arthur: "Ungentle was death, thus early to rob the world of a creature so fair; for her beauty's sake, I would learn who she was, this sweet darling, and where her life was spent."

¶ As Sir Gawain gazed, he knew the Maid of Escalot, whom erewhile he had petitioned to be a lover of his own; but briefly had she responded, none but Lancelot's would she be. To the king he cried: "Remember you not, the other day, when my lady the queen and we twain made merry, that I told you of a maiden, whom Lancelot loved?" "Sir, now you sayest, I recollect it well." "Sir, here lieth she of whom I spake; most in the world, 't is not to be hid, she loved Lancelot of the Lake." "Indeed, for his sake I am sorry; I would fain know the reason, for I think of grief she died."

¶ Sir Gawain made search, and found a purse, bound with gold and pearls, that seemed somewhat to contain; he drew forth a letter, and gave to the king, bidding him open and read. When it was unfolded, therein stood written, concerning the death of that fair maid: —

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¶ "To King Arthur, and his knights of the Round Table, courteous and valiant, and in all combats helpful to the needy, the Maid of Escalot sendeth greeting. To you I make my plaint of the wrong I have suffered, not to the end that any of you may amend it; only I say, that to seek through the world, in no manner of nobleness might be found your peers; therefore would I have you know, that because for many a day truly have I loved the most loyal in the land, hath Death removed me from this world; if you inquire for whom I languished, I will not refuse to tell; 't was for the noblest of knights, none so valiant blows to deal, so royal or fair; but so churlish know I none, neither friend nor foe; for no supplication I could make, kneeling and weeping, with sorrowful sighs, would he consent to be my lover, but declared he would have none. Lords, for his sake I brooked woe and care, until at last Death took me, that I might live no longer; for true love was I wrecked, and brought bare of bliss; 't was for Lancelot of the Lake, would ye know for whom."

¶ When Arthur, the noble king, had read the letter, and conned the name, he said that Lancelot was to blame, and had earned everlasting reproach and evil fame, since he had refused her who for love had died; and Sir

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Gawain he asked: "Sir, what is thy rede? What shall we do with this maid?" "Sir, if you will, let us carry her to the palace, and bury her with honor, as the daughter of an earl." Sir Gawain called bearers, and with worship due they conveyed her to the hall; the king told his barons, great and petty, how Lancelot had rejected her petition, and she had perished of grief and care.

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The Death of Arthur

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The Death of Arthur

WORD came to King Arthur, that he must return to Britain, because of the treason of Sir Mordred, who misguided the realm, and wished to wed his uncle's wife. Feasts he made, and gifts he gave, until men said that the times were better than when Arthur ruled; he forged letters, and caused messengers to bring them, wherein it was written that Arthur had died, and it was time to choose another king. Mordred called a parliament at Canterbury, where the people gathered, and gave him the crown. A fortnight he feasted, and then rode to Winchester, to prepare for his bridal, for he was minded to wed the queen, whether she would or no. Queen Guinevere begged a fortnight's grace, to buy clothes in London, for herself and her maidens; when she came to the city, with knights of her kin, she threw herself into the Tower, and barred the gates. Mordred was wroth, and came to London, but could not take the Tower.

¶ The Archbishop of Canterbury rode thither, his cross carried before: "Sir, for cross on rood, what deed is this, that you are minded to do?" Mordred swore that he would hang the archbishop, or draw him with wild horses;

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the bishop fled to Canterbury, where he cursed Mordred, with book and bell. When Mordred heard, he sent folk to seize him; the bishop dared not tarry, but took gold and silver, and fled to the wild; between two hoar woods, he built a chapel, to lead a hermit's life; world's joy he forsook, and black robes he donned, watching and praying for England, that suffered such woe.

¶ With a hundred galleys Arthur crossed the sea, and landed at Dover; there was a battle on the strand, for Mordred had beset the coast with knights and archers. Sir Gawain took arms, but wore no helm, for he suffered from the wound Lancelot had given him; he was struck on the brow with a piece of an oar, so that he never spake again. Naught could stand against Arthur; of the traitors, some were slain, and some fled to Canterbury, to warn their master Sir Mordred. With bold heart, Mordred made ready for battle; on the morrow, the hosts met on the downs, and fought from morn to eve; never did knight bear himself more bravely than Arthur on that day. The end was, that the king kept the field, while Mordred lay at Canterbury, full of grief and care. At morn, Arthur buried his dead in deep pits, with mounds over, that the places might be known. In a ship, by a

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mast, he found the body of Sir Gawain; many a time the king swooned before he revived. Sir Gawain they laid on a bier, and buried the bold baron in the church, in the middle of the choir. Arthur changed cheer, no wonder he was sad; of his dear sister's son should he hear nevermore.

¶ Mordred dared not abide, but fled westward; Arthur lay at Salisbury, and summoned his barons to attend him at Whitsuntide. Men obeyed, for word went forth that the king was in the right; his host grew great, while Mordred gathered folk from afar, and strengthened himself with mighty gifts. A battle was set between them, after the feast of the Trinity; glad was the king, when the day was named.

¶ On the eve of the battle, King Arthur had a dream. He thought he sat crowned in his royal robes; his throne was a mighty wheel. He looked down, and below him saw a black water, wherein dragons swam. The king shuddered, lest he should fall among these fiends, who fought one with another; on a sudden, the wheel went round, and every dragon seized him by a limb. Arthur shrieked, as if he would go mad; his chamberlains ran, and roused him. All night he waked, with sad heart, in his tent lit with many tapers;

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toward morn, he fell asleep. By a broad and deep river he saw Sir Gawain, with an unnumbered host, shining like angels from heaven. Never was the king so blithe as when his nephew he saw. "Welcome, Sir Gawain! If thou livest, well for me! Tell me, dear friend, hide it not, who are the folk that follow thee?" "Sir, these are they who bide in bliss where I dwell. Lords and ladies were they, who have lost the life of this world; when I was a man, I fought for their sakes; now find I them my dearest friends; they bless the day that I was born, and leave have they asked with me to wend, that they might meet you here. A month's truce must you take, ere you array yourself for battle; Lancelot of the Lake cometh to your aid, with many a man of worth; to-day you must not fight, or else shall you be slain."

¶ The king woke and wept: "Alas, the sad sound!" In haste he dight on his robes, and to his lords he cried: "Alas, I have been in deep dreams, so that naught can give me joy; we must send to Sir Mordred, and choose another time, or else be undone; this I learned, as in bed I lay. Go, Sir Lucan, thou who hast wise words at command, and take with thee bishops and bold barons." The knights issued, a hundred strong; before Mordred they

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stood, and greeted him honorably, as barons of noble blood: "King Arthur saluteth thee, and beseecheth thee a month to stint this strife, for the sake of Him who died on rood." Mordred answered, like boar at bay: "What he hath promised, let him perform; of us twain one shall die; tell him, I will mar him if I may." "Sir, if you twain meet, many a knight shall rue; better let him reign while he liveth, and after his death rule England, dale and down." Mordred paused, and gazed up frowning: "If he will give me Cornwall and Kent, true love shall be between; let us meet on yonder height, and counsel together; if our agreement fail, no boot but battle." "Sir, will you come with knights twelve or fourteen, or with all your host, in helmets and broad hauberks?" "Let our armies look on, and we talk between."

¶ The knights took leave, and made haste to King Arthur, where he sat in his tent: "Sir, we have proffered peace, if you will bequeath him the crown, and in your life grant him Cornwall and Kent; 'twixt both hosts, shall you meet on yon plain; if your agreement fail, no remedy but to fight." Arthur plighted his faith, and arrayed his host in seven battles, bright banners before; when the armies met, never was seen fairer sight; but Mordred had

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most men, twelve against two. To his lords cried King Arthur: "I trust not yon traitor, that he meaneth not to betray us; if you see blade drawn, prick forward, and slay him and his host." Mordred, who was fierce, shouted to his soldiers: "I wis, sad is Arthur, that he hath lost his land; with fourteen knights, and no more, shall we meet by yonder thorn; if treason come between, bear forth your broad banners."

¶ Afoot, with thirteen knights, Arthur fared to the thorn-tree, with helmet, shield, and broad hauberk; when almost they were accorded, an adder glided out, and stung a knight; the knight drew a sword, to slay the serpent; when Arthur's host beheld, they rushed on; naught could withstand them, for they deemed treason was wrought. That day died many a brave knight, and perished many a bold man.

¶ Arthur started on his steed, naught could withstand him. Mordred was wild with rage, and leapt into his saddle; no more of truce, but they feutred spears, and rushed together. Mordred marred many a man, and rode through many a rank; and Arthur ceased not to deal cruel wounds, from morn when the fray began, till night fell; many a shield was shivered and curse cried, many a brand bent,

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and helm broken. The hosts ran together, a hundred thousand strong; since Brutus parted from Troy, and in Britain made his home, never were such wonders wrought. By even, on that field remained no living man, save Mordred alone, and Arthur with two of his knights, Lucan the butler, bleeding of many a wound, and his brother Sir Bedivere, sick and infirm.

¶ Arthur cried: "Shall we not bring down this thief?" A spear he gript, and they ran together; Mordred he struck in the breast, so that the point came out at the back, and he spake no more; as he fell, he lifted his hand, and through helm and crest smote the king, so that thrice he swooned.

¶ Between them, Sir Lucan and Sir Bedivere sustained the king; together they quitted the field, that was covered with slain. To a chapel they turned, for they wist not what better to do; all night they lay in that chapel by the sea, crying mercy to Mary, with dreary heart and woeful voice, and to her dear son they prayed: "Jesu, for thy seven names, show his soul the right way, that he lose not heavenly bliss!"

¶ As Sir Lucan gazed from a height, he saw bold barons, who robbed the dead of bezants and rings; to the king he returned, and warned

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him with words: "Sir, from yon hill have I seen folk draw to the downs; I wot not if they mean evil or good; let us make ready, and wend to a town." "As thou sayest; Sir Lucan, lift me, while my life may last." The king embraced him with all his might; he was weak with loss of blood, and swooned as he looked down; Sir Lucan was hard bested; he held the king till his own heart broke.

¶ When the king came to himself, he stood beside an altar; Sir Lucan, whom he loved, lay afoam in his blood; his brother Sir Bedivere would not come nigh, but wept as if he were wild. The king turned to Sir Bedivere, with keen words: "Take Excalibur, my good sword, better brand was never seen; go, cast it in the salt flood, and I ween, wonders shalt thou behold. Hie thee, for cross on rood, and bring word what thou hast seen."

¶ The knight was fain to save that good sword: "What gain, if none own it? 'T were madness to throw it in the flood." He hid it under a tree, and returned. "Sir, I did as you bade." "What sawest thou there? Tell me, if thou canst." "Certes, sir, naught save waters deep, and waves wan." "Ah, thou hast broken my hest! False man, why hast thou so done? Other tidings must thou bring."

¶ The knight ran, and thought to hide the

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sword, and cast the scabbard in the sea: "If aught strange befalleth, some token shall I perceive." He let the sheath sink, and a while stood on the land; to the king he went: "Sir, by the rood, 't is done." "Sawest thou marvels more?" "Certes, sir, naught." "Ah, false traitor! Twice hast thou wrought treason; be sure it shall cost thee dear." Sir Bedivere cried: "Lord, thy mercy!" and cast the brand into the sea; then might he know what the king meant; from the water came a hand and seized the sword, brandishing as if it would break, and glinted away like a gleam.

¶ He went back, and said: "Sir, I saw a hand; it came from the water, and thrice brandished that royal sword." "Help me, that I wend thither." Sir Bedivere guided his lord to the shore, where lay a fair ship, full of ladies; she that was brightest of beauty wept and wrung her hands: "Brother, woe is me; from healing hast thou been too long, alas for thy cruel pangs!" The knight made a woeful cry: "Lord, whither are you bound? alas, whither away?" With a sad voice spake the king: "For a while will I go to the vale of Avalon, there to be healed of my wound."

¶ When the ship was brought from land, Sir Bedivere saw them no more. Through the forest he sought, over hills and hoar holts;

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reckless of life, all night he roved weeping, and against the day found a chapel, between two hoar woods. A strange sight he saw; a hermit lay before a new tomb, covered with gray marble, and writ with fair letters; beside, on a hearse, a hundred tapers burned. To the hermit he went, and asked who was buried there. "I can tell no more, than that at midnight were ladies here, I wis not who in the world they were; on a bier this body they brought, and buried with its sore wounds. Bright bezants they offered, a hundred pounds and more, and bade me pray day and night, for sake of him who lieth in this hoar mould, to Our Lady, that she should help his soul."

¶ The knight read the letters, and for sorrow fell to the earth: "Hermit, of a truth, here lieth the lord I have lost, bold Arthur, the best knight that ever in Britain was born; give me of thy raiment, for Him who bore the crown of thorns, and while I live let me dwell with thee, and pray for his sake."

¶ The hermit did not refuse the request; sometime had he been that archbishop, whom Mordred had driven from the realm, to take his lodging in the wood. Jesu he thanked for His grace, that in peace had Sir Bedivere come, and with heart and hand received him, that they might live in company.

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¶ When Guinevere, the king's wife, wist that all had gone to wreck, with five ladies she went to Almesbury, to make herself a nun; there lived she a holy life, in prayers to watch and weep; never could she be merry, but wore robes black and white.

¶ When the news came to Lancelot, what wonder he was grieved? He gathered his friends, and the wise knights who were with him; their galleys were prepared, they dight themselves and were ready to help Arthur, and make Mordred bare of bliss. Crowned kings had he seven, earls many, and knights beyond number; the host beamed like a flame, the wind was as they wished; by Heaven's grace they took haven at Dover.

¶ At Dover Lancelot heard of the battle on the downs, how Sir Gawain was buried, how Arthur and Mordred had slain one another, and all who had fought lay dead on the field; and news he heard, that vexed his heart, how Queen Guinevere, the king's wife, had lived in sorrow and care; with five ladies away had she gone, in land they wist not whither, dead or alive. He called his kings, while Sir Bors stood by: "Lords, tarry by these banks, a fortnight from this morn; I ride to learn, who his life hath lost. Look ye, haste not to ride."

¶ Lancelot had neither peace nor rest, but

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departed with sad cheer, and three days went westward, as one who knoweth not evil or good. He espied a tower built by a running brook, where he hoped to get some stay of his life. As he roved through a rich cloister, for weeping almost mad, he saw a fair lady clad in nun's attire; thrice she swooned, in pain so great, that the nuns took her up, and brought her to her room: "Madam, hath any angered you, in bower or hall?" She answered nay, and bade them call Lancelot, with the abbess and the others, who dwelt in those walls; in their presence she said: "Abbess, I confess, through this man and myself — dearly one another we loved — hath befallen this woeful war; slain is my peerless lord, and many a knight valiant and free; therefore for sorrow almost I died, when I set eyes on his face. When I beheld, sooth to say, cold grew my heart, that ever should I have lived to see this day, when for my sake so many bold barons lie slain. But God, of almighty power, hath put me where I will hold. I am set in a place, where my soul's healing will I wait, till God send me grace, through mercy of His wide wounds, that I may live my sins to amend, that hereafter may I have a sight of His face at Doomsday on His right side; therefore, Sir Lancelot of the Lake, for my love's sake I implore, that

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my company thou forsake, and to thy kingdom wend thy way; keep thy realm from war and wreck, and take a wife with whom to play; love well thy world's mate, I pray God give you joy together; God, almighty king, I beseech that He grant you joy and peace. But I entreat thee, never henceforth, for any cause, come hither, or send me word, but dwell in bliss; I implore God everlasting, that He grant me grace to mend my fault."

¶ "Now, sweet madam, such a thing I would not do, to have all the world at my will; so untrue shall you find me never; forbid it God, that ever to you-ward such wrong should I accomplish, since together have we led our life by day and night; to God I make a vow, the same destiny that for you is reserved will I myself receive in some holy house, hereafter to please Almighty God; to please God hereafter shall I do mine intent, and in especial for yourself pray, while God lend me life."

¶ "Oh, wilt thou," cried the queen, "fulfil this thy pledge?" "If I answered nay, I were worthy to be burned; burned were I worthy to be, if I would not accept such life as in penance here you lead, and for God's sake endure sorrow and care, even as in liking we lived. By Mary, maid mother, and wife, till God part us by dear death, blithely to penance

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will I go, if I may find any hermit who for God's sake will receive me, and clothe me with raiment, white or black."

¶ "Madam," said Lancelot of the Lake, "kiss me, and I will part." "Nay, that I will not do; Lancelot, think of it no more; we must be minded to abstain from what erst were our delights; let us think on Him who hath bought us, and so shall we please God; consider this world, how it containeth naught save war, and strife, and battle." With that they parted, while none on earth could relate the sorrow they showed, wringing their hands, and lamenting, until both fell in a swoon. With sad cheer, ladies bore the queen to her chamber, and busied themselves to bring her back from her woe.

¶ They who were with Lancelot comforted him as they might; when he came to himself, he took his gear, and parted without more. His heart was heavy as lead: "Righteous God, what shall I do? Alas, accursed, why was I born?" Away to a forest he went; he would fain have lost life, and he rent his rich robes. All night he wept and wrung his hands, roving as if he were wild; at break of day, he saw a chapel; a bell he heard toll, and thither he hied. A priest he found ready to sing, and mass with grief he heard; the hermit was that

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archbishop, who for his honesty had been exiled; the mass he sang sighing, and color often he changed. When service was over, the archbishop brought him a habit, and welcomed Lancelot, who knelt before him: "Sir, as our friend be welcome to this home in bare banks; dwell with us this one night, if no longer it be in your power."

¶ When they knew each other, Lancelot embraced him, and asked tidings of Arthur and his knights. A hundred times Lancelot's heart broke, as Sir Bedivere related the tale; toward Arthur's tomb he turned, his courage waxing cold; he threw his arms about the walls, painted in colors fair; before the hermit he knelt, who shrove him of his sin, and entreated that he would take him for his brother, in bower and hall to serve God, rightful king of mercy. The bishop did not refuse, but was ready to grant the boon; Lancelot he welcomed, and gave thanks to Jesu, true on His throne; he shrove him clean of his sin, and dight on him a habit.

¶ Lancelot's host lay at Dover, and waited his coming, till on a day it befell, that Sir Lionel, with fifty lords, departed to seek his lord; he took the road to London, and there was slain.

¶ Sir Bors would remain no longer, but dight himself and made ready. The host he sent

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homeward, God give them wind and fair weather. Hector took his separate way, and Bors turned to the west, aware of neither evil nor good. On a morn, in the forest he found a brook, and followed down until he espied a chapel; he heard a bell toll, and staid for mass; Lancelot he found, and begged leave to remain.

¶ Ere half a year had passed, to the chapel had come seven of the comrades, who roved in quest of their friend. When they heard Lancelot's name, none had heart to go, but together they dwelt, as if it had been Heaven's will, and for seven years led a holy life. Lancelot became priest, and mass he sang, living in penance and prayer, so that the time seemed not long; Sir Bors and his fellows read books and rang bells; so wasted they grew, that they were scarce to be known.

¶ Against an even, Lancelot sickened; to his side he called the bishop, and his companions great and small: "Brethren, I may stay no longer; my baleful blood of life is bare; it boots not to hide, my foul flesh turneth toward earth. Brethren, I pray you, to-morrow when you find me dead, dight me on a bier and bear me to Joyeuse Garde. For the love of Almighty God, bury my body in that place; thereto erst I plighted my truth, alas it re-

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penteth me now." "Mercy, sir," cried they, "for love of Him who died on rood! If aught evil hath grieved you, 't is but heaviness of the blood; to-morrow shall you be better, would you be of comfort."

¶ So spake the rest; but Lancelot betook himself to his bed and summoned the bishop, who heard confession, and shrove him of his sins; with good will he received God, son of Mary, pure maid. Sir Bors wept his full, and to bed went they all. A little before day, as the bishop lay in his bed, a laughter took him, that frightened them sorely; they waked him, and asked if he suffered much. "Alas," he cried: "and wellaway! Why came ye near, to wake me by word? Here was Lancelot, bright of face, with angels thirty thousand, who bore him on high, and opened heaven's gates; such a sight I see, as none may describe." "Sir, for cross on rood, away with such words! Lancelot naught aileth, by prime he shall be well." Candles they lit, and went to his bed, where they found him dead, fair as if asleep. "Alas," cried Sir Bors: "that ever I was born! Gone is the best knight, who ever bestrode steed; may Jesu, who with thorns was crowned, in heaven foster his soul!"

¶ Until the fifth day they ceased not to sing and read; after that, they made a bier, the

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bishop and the rest, and went their way to Joyeuse Garde, that stately hold. In a chapel amid the choir they dug a grave, and waked him three days, with cold care. While they stood about the bier, and would have brought him to burial, entered Lancelot's brother Sir Hector, who had sought him seven years; he gazed toward the choir, and listened to the mass. They knew him, and he recognized them not; Sir Bors wept and sang; when they clasped the dead, there was none but wrung his hands. Sir Hector thought the time long, till he might ask who it could be. Sir Bors gently responded: "Sir Hector, here lieth your lord Lancelot of the Lake, for whom we mourn." Hector they took in arms, and led him to kiss the dead, beseeching him to-night to share their watch, for love of Jesu, while sorrow darkened his soul; as he embraced the dead, tears flowed from his eyes. At last no longer could they wait, but buried the body, with sorrowful mind: "Of Jesu Christ a boon I ask, and of His mother Mary bright; Lord, as Thou madest sun and moon, and as God and man art Thou, bring this soul to Thy throne, on gentle knight hadst Thou ever mercy!"

℄ Hector did not return to his steed, but left his horse free to stay or go; there was he fain

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to dwell, and pray for Lancelot, as long as he lived. Hermit's weeds he donned, and to their chapel they went their way; a fortnight on foot they fared, or ever they reached home.

¶ When they passed Almesbury, dead they found Guinevere the queen, her cheeks fresh and cherry-red. Between them they took her up, and with merry mass laid her at Arthur's side. Glastonbury is that chapel hight, a noble abbey of order pure. Still lieth Arthur buried there, and beside him Queen Guinevere, while with gentle voice, monks read and sing:

"Jesu, Thou whose wounds were sore, grant us all the bliss of Heaven!"

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Notes

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Notes

THE five tales which form the greater part of this book, relating to Erec, Alexander, Ewain, Perceval, and Gawain, are presented in the form of a version in which the ideas and language of the original are closely followed, except in a certain degree of necessary condensation. Any considerable omissions are noted below.

The five stories which follow, regarding Merlin, Lancelot, the Quest of the Holy Grail, the Maid of Escalot, and the Death of Arthur, depending on French prose romances, or on the English poem known as Morte Arthur, are intended to give only an outline of the narratives.

The Introduction deals with questions still in debate, and the views enunciated are given as individual opinions, which to the writer appear probable and reasonable.

For brief notices of the cycle and its critical literature, reference may be made to G. Paris, Romans en vers du cycle de la Table Ronde, in Histoire Littéraire de la France, vol. xxx., 1888, and his La littérature française au moyen âge, Paris, 1890, ch. iv., and notes; W. Golther, Geschichte der deutschen Litteratur, Stuttgart, 1893, vol. i. pp. 142–178. The work of J. Rhŷs, Studies in the Arthurian Legend, Oxford, 1891, is an attempt to reconstruct Celtic mythology by aid of the proper names and themes of the extant tales.

The edition of W. Förster, Christian von Troyes, Sämtliche Werke, Halle, 1891–96, as yet includes only the Erec, Cliges, and Yvain. Chevalier de la Charrette is edited by P. Tarbé, Rheims, 1849; Perceval le Gallois, by C. Potvin, Mons, 1866.

A few words used in the version may require explanation. *Feutre* (French *feutrer*), to rest the lance on the

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pad in front of the saddlebow. *Glaive*, iron of the lance-head. *Lorain*, the bridle and its appurtenances. *Nones*, the ninth hour, mid-afternoon. *Poitral*, the breastplate of a horse. *Prime*, the first hour, sunrise. *Tierce*, the third hour, mid-morn. *Vair* (Latin *varius*), diversely colored, used of furs, stuffs, lance-shafts, horses, and the like; also of eyes of blondes, perhaps with reference to changes of color of the iris. *Varlet*, a youth of noble birth, not yet knighted. *Vassal*, warrior. *Vavassour*, nobleman not of the highest rank.

Erec. The following passages are not contained in the version: (1) The proem, (2) Lists of Knights of the Round Table and of King Arthur's tenants (1691–1750, 1932–2024). These, for the most part, consist of names otherwise unknown, and no doubt in some measure the addition of the author. (3) The long adventure of "The Joy of the Court," lines 5367–6410. This episode, though full of spirit, and containing beautiful passages, is unconnected with the rest of the history, and adds so much to the difficulties of the modern reader, that it has seemed best not to attempt a rendering.

As an example of the metre, may be cited the prefatory lines: —

Li vilains dit an son respit
Que tel chose a l'an an despit,
Qui mout vaut miauz que l'an ne cuide.
Por ce fet bien qui son estuide
Atorne a bien, quel que il l'et;
Car que son estuide antrelet,
Tost i puet tel chose teisir,
Qui mout vandroit puis a pleisir.
Por ce dit Crestiiens de Troies
Que reisons est que totes voies
Doit chascuns panser et antandre
A bien dire et a bien aprandre,

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Et tret d'un conte d'avanture
Une mout bele conjointure,
Par qu'an puet prover et savoir
Que cil ne fet mie savoir,
Qui sa sciance n'abandone
Tant con Deus la grace l'an done.
D'Erec, le fil Lac, est li contes,
Que devant rois et devant contes
Depecier et corronpre suelent
Cil qui de conter vivre vuelent.
Des or commencerai l'estoire
Qui toz jorz mes iert an memoire
Tant con durra chrestiantez.
De ce s'est Crestiiens vantez.

"In his proverb saith the boor, that a thing is despised, which nevertheless is more precious than is credited (that is, men scorn things of whose worth they are ignorant). Therefore well doth the man who turneth to good purpose his study, whatsoever it may be; for whoso intermitteth may well leave unmentioned a thing, which would have given pleasure. Therefore saith Christian of Troyes, in reason ought every one to muse and mind fair speech and fair essay; and from a tale of adventure he borroweth a right fair situation, whereby may be proven and made known, that unwise is he who doth not lavish his science, while God granteth grace. Of Erec, son of Lac, is the narrative, that before kings and counts are wont to maim and spoil those who by recitation live. Now beginneth the history, that forever shall be remembered, so long as Christianity shall endure. Such vaunt hath Christian made."

The poet was conscious, with good reason, of having erected a monument *ære perennius*. The mention of sources is perhaps only a formula.

The omitted episode proceeds as follows: Erec, with Enidè and Guivret, arrive at Brandigant, the castle of

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King Evrain, where is to be accomplished an adventure, from which no knight has ever returned. At the entrance of a garden, flowering winter and summer, enclosed by art magic with a wall of air, the hero finds a row of stakes, each of which bears the helmeted head of a knight, save only one which carries a horn. Proceeding, he finds a lady reposing on a silver bed; a knight suddenly appears, and a desperate battle ensues, in which Erec is the victor. The knight, Mabonagrain, a nephew of King Evrain, relates his history; the lady of the garden and himself from childhood have been lovers; desiring to enjoy the exclusive privilege of his society, the damsel has extracted a promise to grant any request she should make, and then required him to remain in the garden until the appearance of a knight who should prove his superior; the joy with which the court would receive his return, when this event should happen, has given its name to the adventure. Erec blows the horn, a signal for general delight, the damsel alone remaining sad, in the expectation that she will now be deprived of her lover. To Enidè, who offers consolation, she explains that she is the daughter of the count of Lalut, and was born in that city. Enidè thus discovers that the maiden is her cousin, Lalut, as for the first time we learn, being the title of the castle in which took place the combat for the hawk. On her part, Enidè recounts her adventures; the principal personages of the story are brought together in the palace, whither have flocked the barons of the country, and a festival is held of three days' duration. Concerning the further fortunes of the lovers of the garden, nothing is said.

Cliges. The portion here rendered occupies lines 45–2382. The name of the heroine seems to be a romantic formation from the French *sore*, golden in color, and

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amor; the lady is a sister of Gawain. This section is only an introduction; of the main body of the work, an outline is as follows: After the death of the emperor of Greece, Alis (i. e. Alexius), his younger son, sends messengers to inquire the fate of Alexander; the sole survivor of this embassy reports that the heir to the throne has perished at sea. Alis therefore ascends the throne. When he hears of this step, Alexander repairs to Greece, in order to claim his heritage; eventually an agreement is made, that Alis shall nominally reign, but remain single and leave the crown to Cliges, while Alexander shall possess the substance of authority. After the death of Alexander, however, Alis proceeds to break the contract, by asking in marriage Fenicè, daughter of the emperor of Germany. The emperor pleads that his daughter is precontracted, but agrees to yield to a semblance of force; Alis leads an army to Cologne, and is accompanied by Cliges; the two young people fall in love at first sight; Fenicè, declaring that she will not follow the example of Iseut, who divorced affection and duty, and belonged at the same time to two persons, appeals for aid to her governess, Thessala, who is skilled in magic; a potion is given to Alis, which prevents the consummation of the marriage. On the way home, Cliges rescues the bride from an attempted seizure on the part of the Duke of Saxony, her former suitor. The young prince, unwilling to remain in the neighborhood of his uncle's wife, repairs to Britain, where he distinguishes himself in Arthur's service, but by love-longing is compelled to return to Constantinople; after frequent meetings, the lovers acknowledge their mutual inclination. Fenicè declares her determination never to disgrace herself; it is agreed, that by means of a mock funeral, she shall escape from her husband, to fall into the hands of her lover; this takes place, and the pair live together in

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the concealment of a tower. Being at last discovered, they fly to the court of Arthur, who undertakes by force of arms to support the claim of his guest on the throne of Greece. Alis, however, dies, and Cliges is recalled to Constantinople, to reign in peace with his wife Fenicè. It is, affirms the poet, because of this history that the empresses of Constantinople are so jealously guarded.

Remarkable for their relation to the history of literature, and as a display of national feeling, are the fine lines 30–44:—

Ce nos ont nostre livre apris,
Que Grece ot de chevalerie
Le premier los et de clergie.
Puis vint chevalerie a Rome
Et de la clergie la some,
Que or est an France venue.
Deus doint qu'ele i soit retenue,
Et que li leus li abelisse
Tant que ja meis de France n'isse
L'enors qui s'i est arestee.
Deus l'avoit as autres prestee:
Car des Grejois ne des Romains
Ne dit an meis ne plus ne mains:
D'aus est la parole remese
Et estainte la vive brese.

"Our books have taught us, that of chivalry and clergy (i. e. learning) had Greece the highest praise. Afterward to Rome came chivalry, and the height of clergy, which now hath passed to France. God grant that it there be retained, and the place please it so well, that from France may never depart the honor which here hath tarried. To the others had God lent it; for of Greeks and Romans is said neither more nor less; of them hath mention ceased, and extinguished is their vivid flame."

In the proem the author affirms that the material of his

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story was obtained from a book in the cathedral library of Beauvais; the assertion may safely be taken to be nothing more than one of the conventional references to imaginary written sources common with mediæval romancers.

Chevalier au Lion. The story is fully related only after the departure of the hero from his wife, line 2639; the introductory portion of the poem I have given only in outline. Out of gratitude for her kindness to his friend, Gawain makes Lunete his *amie;* other knights of Arthur follow the example, and devote themselves to ladies of the countess (lines 2395–2451). The proem: "Arthur, the good king of Britain, whose prowess teacheth us to be brave and courteous, held a royal court at the feast which is so costly, that it is entitled Pentecost. The court was at Carlisle in Wales; after the meal, in the halls, knights gathered where ladies invited; news some told, and of love some spake, of his anguish and pain, and of the great good which oft doth befall the disciples of his covenant, noble and good, as then it was. . . . To speak of those who were, let us leave those who are; for better, methinks, is the dead courtier than the living churl. Therefore it pleaseth me to relate what demandeth attention, of the king so famous, that he is mentioned far and near; in so far I agree with Britons, that forever shall his name endure, and through him are remembered the chosen knights that for honor toiled." (In the last allusion, Crestien refers to the belief in Arthur's return attributed to Britons.)

Crestien places the forest of Broceliande in Great Britain; the mention of Carduel or Carlisle, at the poet's time reckoned as belonging to Wales, indicates the locality of the wood as to be sought in the Scottish border. Wace, however, writing at an earlier date, places the

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wood of Brecheliant in Brittany, as the region about the fountain of Berenton, which he himself visited with intent to investigate the marvellous stories associated with the locality, returning, according to his own words, as great a fool as he went. From the character of the passage, it does not seem unreasonable to assume that Wace had reference to a French romance, which may in part have been a version of the tale used by Crestien; it may be supposed that the reciters in Normandy, from whom Wace heard the tale, altered the locality with a view to please continental audiences. A variety of indications point to Scotland as the original scene of the narrative, which may be supposed to have originally belonged to Anglo-Norman romancers. The name of the heroine, Laudinè or Laudunè, may be derived from Laudonia or Lothian; Yvain is himself a Scottish prince, his father Urien being, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth, a king of Moravia or Moray. The name Lunete, here rendered Lunetta, is a diminutive of the French *lune;* the Welshman who adapted the story, after the habit of translators of his country, cambricized the appellation into Luned.

Chevalier de la Charrette (Knight of the Cart). This romance is twice referred to in the Chevalier au Lion, in such manner as to indicate at the time of composing the latter work, the poet had recently been employed on the former; the following is an abstract of the plot. On the borders of Loegria (Arthur's country) is Gorrè, a hostile land whence no adventurous knight returns, and where are confined prisoners from Arthur's realm; if a single inmate makes his escape, the rest must be set free. Baudemagut, king of the region, is wise and just, but has a violent son Meleagant, who makes his appearance in Arthur's court, where he boastfully offers to release his captives, on condition that he be permitted to carry off

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the queen, to the end that British knights may make trial of their prowess in an attempt at rescue. Kay insists on the acceptance of the offer, and is permitted to conduct Guinevere in search of the knight, who has departed in scorn; but Kay is vanquished and the queen carried off. Lancelot and Gawain start in pursuit; the horse of the former being killed by an arrow shot from an invisible hand, he mounts a cart, an action, according to the romance, in those days disgraceful, wagons being used only as tumbrils employed to convey criminals to execution. There are two routes, one over a submerged bridge, and the other over a bridge formed by a sword; Lancelot takes the latter way, Gawain the former. Lancelot, who undergoes derision on account of the vehicle he has used, has a series of adventures; he is guided by damsels, and entertained by knights of Loegria, prisoners in Gorrè; he forces his way through dangerous passes, against the opposition of armed cavaliers, and the deceptions of enchantment, against which he employs a ring, the gift of the fairy by whom he has been brought up. In Badè, the chief stronghold of Baudemagut, under the protection of the latter, he defeats Meleagant in single combat; the queen at first is cold to her rescuer, on account of the degradation to which he has subjected himself, but in the end bestows on him her favors. Lancelot goes in quest of Gawain, but is misguided and imprisoned by Meleagant. From this point, according to the statement made in the poem, the romance was continued by Godefroi de Lagny. Gawain is found clinging to the subaqueous bridge he has vainly attempted to pass; Lancelot, temporarily released, appears in disguise at Arthur's court, and takes part in a tournament, in which he thrice comes off victor; returning to his prison, he is again liberated by the aid of the sister of Meleagant, whom he finally slays. The work is unworthy of

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Crestien, if indeed any considerable part be really of his composition. The work begins with a dedication to the Countess Marie; it was not until 1164 that this lady married Henri of Champagne, so that the production, so far as Crestien had any hand in it, must have been more recent than this date.

Perceval. Of this poem as yet exists no critical edition, the only accessible text being inaccurate. Here omitted as probable interpolations are a brief prologue, in which the work is spoken of as a story of the Grail (conte del graal), and also a passage (lines 1609–1689), in which Perceval's mother is made to give a statement in regard to the history of her slain husband. According to this account, the knight, having been wounded and deprived of his lands in the troublous times succeeding the fall of Uter Pendragon, is carried to the forest when his infant son is two years of age; Perceval's older brothers, having grown to manhood, depart to take service respectively with the king of Avalon and with King Ban of Gomeret, and are both slain in a single day. The passage, intended to emphasize the woes of the widow, seems to be characterized by affectation, and obviously to be the work of a later hand. Wolfram and other successors of Crestien seem to have used a text in which the lady was represented as being a widow at the time of her flight.

In the night after his arrival at the castle of Beaurepaire, lines 3240–3261, Perceval is made to offer the damsel of the castle, by whom he is visited, a place at his couch, where the two pass the remainder of the night in innocence. This trait, illustrative of the simplicity which is the dominant idea of the poem, even in Wolfram's time had given occasion for misunderstanding.

Essential to a comprehension of the poem, as appears to me, is a proper understanding of the meaning con-

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veyed by the proper name of the hero. The appellation Perceval li Galois, or Perceval the Welshman, has been understood equally by the mediæval successors of Crestien and by his modern readers, as indicating that he belonged to a noble family of Wales. It may be held, however, that such was not the idea of the author, who conceived of the youth's mother as a widowed lady of Loegria (England, excluding Northumberland), who, in the disturbances preceding the accession of Arthur, had taken refuge in the Welsh forests. Here she brings up her son, whom she keeps in intentional ignorance of chivalry; the lad wears the dress and carries the arms of the peasants of the country, and is therefore taken for a Welsh rustic; the epithet, given as the result of misunderstanding, in the end becomes attached to the name. This epithet conveyed the notion of rusticity; Perceval the Welshman, understood to signify also Perceval the Simple, is an appropriate title for the hero of a poem which undertakes to exhibit the education of an intelligent but inexperienced character, successively instructed in arms, love, and religious obligation.

It is in the last or ethical section of the work that mention is casually made of a dish or grail; the action of this division of the romance turns upon the failure of the guest to put a question concerning the wonderful things which he sees in the castle of his kinsman. No especial form of inquiry is intended; it has been made a condition of success in the task allotted by Fortune, that the visitor shall manifest a proper degree of interest in the fate of his host.

The part of the romance devoted to Perceval, as already mentioned, deals with education in chivalry, of which the essential duties are represented as charity to the unprotected and piety toward God. These cardinal obligations are at the outset recommended by the mother

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of the hero, reinforced by his teacher in knightly conduct, and finally commanded by his religious instructor. In the lesson of Perceval's teacher are embodied two minor requirements, mercy toward fallen enemies, and reticence of speech. It is the last of these injunctions which is illustrated by the story of the unasked question, in which the grail or dish, as above observed, only incidentally figures. The recommendation of reticence as a virtue, and the exhibition, made in the course of the story, of the limitations attaching to such self-restraint, can be comprehended only in connection with the proverbial philosophy of the Middle Age, which had much to say on the relative merits of speech and silence; with this store of homely wisdom the poet was familiar, and in earlier works had introduced references to some of the saws dealing with the matter; for example, the proem of his earliest extant work consists in a jesting self-defence against the application of a maxim, which might deter a young writer by its sweeping approbation of reserve.

The ideas embodied in popular proverbial wisdom not only control the action of the romance, but are themselves made subservient to a deeper moral conception. The failure of the hero is a necessary result of his imperfection of character; again, the consequences of this failure are made to convey the further lesson, that disappointment is often a necessary part of education, that despair is a mistake, and that it is never too late to mend.

The composition of Crestien has received small attention from this ethical side; for an examination of the author's idea, and justification of the views here enunciated, I can only refer to an article on the Legend of the Holy Grail (I. The Perceval of Crestien), contained in the Journal of American Folk-Lore, vol. x. no. xxxvii., March–June, 1897.

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The Adventures of Gawain. In the text is given only the first of the episodes belonging to the portion of the poem which deals with the adventures of Gawain (Gauvain). The story, which is continuous, proceeds as follows: —

After leaving the castle of Thiébault, the hero spends the night in an abbey, on the following day arrives at Cavalon, the city in which he is to do battle, and which belongs to the king whose father he is accused of having murdered. At the gate of the town, Gawain meets the young king, who is about to depart on a hunt, and who therefore commends the stranger, whom he does not know, to the care of his youthful sister. Gawain becomes enamored of the damsel, and proffers lifelong service; in the midst of the courtship, an old knight enters, and accuses the princess of embracing her father's murderer; the commons rise and rush to the palace, with the view of slaying the hereditary enemy; the princess, however, assists her lover to reach a tower, and supplies him with arms, save that he is compelled to use a chessboard instead of a shield; the tower is successfully defended, the maiden flinging on the heads of the assailants the great chessmen, until the return of the king, accompanied by the knight who had carried the challenge to Arthur's court. The zeal of the people is repressed, and a truce is agreed upon; Gawain is to go free, on condition of obtaining the bleeding lance, and in the event of failure returning at the expiration of a year. (At this point is introduced the chapter describing Perceval's visit to the hermit, after which the narrative is continued, without reference to the interruption.) Departing from Cavalon, Gawain rides on, until he reaches a dangerous country, described as part of Galloway (la bogue de Galvoie). The ensuing complicated narration can only be briefly noticed. The theme is, that Queen Igerna, the mother

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of Arthur, with her daughter Anna, wife of Lot, at the time king of Norway, and mother of Gawain, and with her granddaughter Clarissant, sister of Gawain, has, at the time of the disturbances already mentioned as subsequent to the death of her husband Uther (Uter in French spelling), fled to this wilderness; here she has erected a castle, which, by the aid of art magic, she has fortified with enchantments in such manner that only a perfect knight can enter. Gawain, in company with a scornful damsel, called the Proud Maid of Loegria (Li Orguilleuse de Logres), after an adventure in Galloway, reaches this stronghold, and dissolves its enchantments; being wounded, he is attended by his sister, according to the directions of his grandmother, who, however, is ignorant of his name. On the next day, accompanied by the proud damsel, he is persuaded to cross a perilous ford, and on the other side encounters a knight who makes it a rule not to contend with a single foe, but only with at least two knights at once. Giromelant is a feudal enemy of Gawain, his father having been killed by Lot, but also a lover of Clarissant, sister of Gawain, whom he has never seen, but loved from hearsay. He is detested by the proud maiden, Gawain's companion, whom he has formerly held as a captive, she having been stolen in youth from her country. From this knight Gawain learns the names of the ladies of the castle, and undertakes to convey a love-message to his sister; he then reveals himself. In the case of this redoubtable foe, Giromelant waives his rule, and a battle is arranged, to which each antagonist is to invite his friends. Gawain returns to the castle, but does not disclose his identity; he sends a message to Arthur, who is at the town of Orcanie. In the middle of a line, the poem abruptly ends.

Parzival. Here may be inserted some notice of the

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poem of Wolfram of Eschenbach. The course of the story in general answers to that of Crestien, but with many changes and additions. Proper names are supplied; Gahmuret for the father of the hero, Herzeloydè for his mother (apparently a romantic formation signifying Heart's-sorrow), Sigunè for the cousin (who, in the German poem, is thrice introduced, and from whom Parzival, shortly after leaving his mother's manor, is represented as learning his own name and rank), Anfortas for the Fisher King, Cundrie for the ugly maiden; Condwiramurs (Love's Guidance) replaces Blancheflour; the whole story is linked together and romanticized. In order to conclude the unfinished tale, Wolfram borrowed a suggestion from Crestien's Yvain; Parzival fights an indecisive encounter with his best friend, Gawain, whom he does not recognize in armor; desiring to broaden his picture, and introduce the heathen world, the poet could hit on no better expedient than to repeat the same situation in connection with a Moorish knight; in order to provide such a champion, he composed an introductory section relating to a temporary alliance of Parzival's father with a heathen queen, of which intimacy comes a son, Feirefiz, of chequered color answering to his mixed blood. The two half-brothers, after a hard encounter, discover their relationship; the atonement of Parzival being complete, Cundrie appears, and conducts him to the castle of the Grail, where he is joined by his wife Condwiramurs. The essential alterations are those connected with the history of the Grail, described as essence of all that is desirable; it is kept in the castle of Munsalvæsche (Mont Sauvage, the Wild Mount), where it is guarded by a company of Knights Templars, who forcibly avert intrusion; it is served by noble youths and maidens, who must observe virginity, save that the king may marry; countries without a ruler may obtain a sov-

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ereign from the Grail, and kings of the earth hence obtain consorts. The Grail miraculously supplies its retinue with food, of whatever sort each guest desires; by its power the dying are kept alive; it is the object of daily worship; it is invisible to unbelievers. In these characteristics there is an obvious relation to similar ideas of the French prose romances; the parallelism cannot be accounted for by coincidence; it must therefore be assumed, that beside the romance of Crestien, Wolfram had some information respecting the French works which grew out of the latter. Curiously enough, he represents the Grail, not as the vessel of the sacrament, but as a jewel, the same by contact with which the phœnix destroys and reproduces itself. It is hard to decide whether this deviation was the result of ignorance or intention. The Parzival, in spite of its faults full of elevated poetry, is a noble work, of which no abstract can give an idea.

Merlin. The romance is edited by G. Paris and J. Ulrich, Paris, 1886. The tale, originally in verse, is preserved in its entirety only through a prose recast. The story originally extended no further than Arthur's coronation; the remainder, containing an account of Merlin's relations to Arthur, and his death, belongs to a later prose continuation. A second and different continuation has had more currency than that from which is taken the last chapter of the extracts above given; this tale, used by Malory, gives an account of wars in which the young king is assisted by Merlin. It does not appear that any of these narratives had traditional root; they have grown out of the history of Geoffrey of Monmouth. I have selected a few chapters, as containing situations of especial interest. The story recites, that after the establishment of Arthur on the throne, and during a visit of Anna, Arthur became father of Mordred. This relation, which

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changed the latter from a nephew to a son of the king, and made Arthur's fall attributable to his own crime, was created by minstrels in order to heighten the tragic situation, and foreign to the story as known to Crestien.

Joseph of Arimathæa. The poem relating to Joseph and his race, by Robert de Boron, seems first to have made current the interpretation of the Holy Grail as the vessel of the Eucharist. The story relates that the vessel in which Jesus makes his sacrament at the Last Supper passes into the hands of Pilate, who bestows it on his soldier, Joseph of Arimathæa. The Jews, incensed against Joseph for his burial of the body of Jesus, confine him in a dark tower; here, after the Resurrection, the Redeemer appears to him, bringing the vessel, of which Joseph is to be the keeper, and which is to be possessed by but two other persons. The mystery of the vessel is disclosed; it is a symbol of the death of Christ, and is called Chalice. During forty years, Joseph is nourished and illumined by the holy vessel, until he is set free by Vespasian, who, having been miraculously healed, has come to take vengeance on the Jews. With his sister Enygeus, her husband Hebron, and a company of believers, Joseph journeys into foreign lands. In consequence of the sin of lust, a famine falls on the troop; Joseph, praying according to his custom before the vessel, is directed to make a table in imitation of that of the Last Supper, on which he is to put the vessel, and a fish caught by Hebron, who thence receives the name of the Rich Fisher. At the table is left an empty seat representing that occupied by Judas; the righteous are fed with divine grace, but the sinners obliged to retire in shame. The vessel is now named Graal, because it is so agreeable (from *agréer*). Of Hebron's twelve children, the youngest, Alein, declines to marry, and by divine

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command is made the chief of his brethren; it is revealed that he shall hereafter have a son, who is to be the third possessor of the Grail, and occupy the vacant place. Hebron, who returns to his own country, is put in possession of the vessel, and Alein departs to the west, where the heir is to be born. Petrus, another disciple, proceeds to the Vales of Avaron (perhaps a corruption of the isle of Avalon, in the writer's day identified with Glastonbury), where he is to await the arrival of the destined occupant of the empty seat.

The work of Robert may, I think, be considered as the starting-point of the romances concerned with the Holy Grail; the latter found their material in the combination of ideas of this writer with those of Crestien, elaborated by the freest exercise of fancy. See my articles on the Legend of the Holy Grail, in the Journal of American Folk-Lore, nos. xxxvii.–xxxviii., 1897. A different view is taken by A. Nutt, in his well-known work on the Legend of the Holy Grail, with especial reference to the hypothesis of its Celtic origin, in Publications of the Folk-Lore Society, London, 1888.

Lancelot of the Lake. The long prose romance, or series of romances, has been in part paraphrased, and in part given only in the form of a brief abstract, by P. Paris, Les Romans de la Table Ronde, Paris, 1876. The editor divides the romance into five parts: (1) Childhood (enfances); (2) Galehaut; (3) Chevalier de la Charrette (a prose narrative based on Crestien's poem); (4) The Quest of the Holy Grail; (5) Mort Artus. The pages here I have rendered are taken from the first section, which however may have been one of the last composed in order of time. It is to my mind very doubtful whether the earlier part of the romance contains any traditional elements, and whether it has not grown out of Crestien's

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poem; the last section, that of the Death of Arthur, I should regard as the only portion containing older elements.

Quest of the Holy Grail. From the Queste del Saint Graal, edited by F. J. Furnivall, London, 1864. The Quest, though embodied in the Lancelot romance, formed originally an independent narrative. The text, in its present form, is hopelessly confused and contradictory, and very much interpolated. The chapters here rendered give much too favorable an idea of the inconsequent and intolerably rambling narrative. It does not appear who is the hermit mentioned in the account of Galahad's presentation to Arthur; the writer had probably himself no definite idea. The White Knight is a supernatural personage. The vessel in which is found the Sword of Strange Hangings is said to be the ship of Solomon, and the sword that of David. The last chapter is comprehensible only when read in connection with the account of the castle of the Fisher King in the poem of Crestien, a narrative which seems present to the mind of the writer, although the incidents of his story are entirely out of relation to those of his predecessor. Incoherent as is the tale, it has nevertheless had a considerable influence on literature, being the source of that form of the Grail legend which has attained popularity. Other works mentioning Galahad, such as the work erroneously called Grand St. Graal, appear to be dependent on the present romance, having no traditional foundation of any sort. A fuller analysis of the story will be found in the work of Mr. Nutt, above cited. It seems to be generally agreed that the name and activity of Galahad must be considered as an invention of the author of the romance, who chose to substitute this hero for Perceval, as a character better suited to the religious theme.

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The Maid of Escalot. — *The Death of Arthur.* These two chapters are renderings of the first and last portions of the English poem, edited by F. J. Furnivall, under the title of Le Morte Arthur, London, 1864. The exquisitely beautiful work (of the beginning of the fifteenth century?) depends on the French prose romance, but with variations; the writer perhaps obtained his material from oral recitation, and the poem may not have been written, but only recited, and recorded by another hand at a date considerably after the time of its composition.

The following is an outline of the omitted portion of the romance, according to the unknown English poet: —

A squire of the court poisons an apple, with design to kill Sir Gawain, and sets the apple on the fruit at table, with the expectation that the queen will give it to Gawain; she, however, bestows it on a Scottish knight, who dies in consequence, and the queen is supposed to be guilty of his death. The brother of the murdered knight accuses the queen; according to law, the latter must find a champion to do battle within forty days; this news comes to Lancelot, who resolves to undertake her rescue. Sir Gawain and the king debate as to what is to be done; at this point is introduced the appearance of the barge containing the dead body of the maid of Ascolot (as the name is here spelt). After all other knights have refused to espouse the cause of one who is apparently guilty, Bors consents to be the queen's champion; but Lancelot appears at the time appointed, gains the victory over the challenger, Sir Mador, and the truth is brought to light. Agravain insists that the time has come at which the king must be informed of the passion existing between Lancelot and the queen, but Gawain refuses to consent. Agravain, however, carries out his plan, and a trap is set for Lancelot; during Arthur's absence, he is found in the queen's chamber, by Agravain and Mordred, with twelve

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knights; Lancelot strikes down one of the knights and gets his armor; he then slays Agravain and puts the troop to flight. Gawain regrets the death of his brother Agravain, but considers that he has merited his fate. Queen Guinevere is sentenced to be burned, and sent to the stake under guard of two of Gawain's brothers; Lancelot attacks the party, slays the brothers of Gawain, and rescues the queen, whom he conveys to his castle of Joyus Garde. Gawain, informed of the fate of his favorite brother, is in despair, and vows mortal feud against Lancelot. Arthur besieges Joyus Garde without success, owing his life to the generosity of Lancelot; the king is touched by this conduct. The Pope interferes, on the ground that the guilt of the queen is not proven, and it is agreed that she shall be returned to Arthur; she is escorted by Lancelot, with great magnificence, drest in white apparel; Lancelot swears that she is innocent of the offence with which she is charged. Arthur is sorry for the war, but Gawain declares that only the death of one or the other may end the quarrel. Lancelot repairs to his kingdom on the Continent, and makes himself master of France, then called Gaul. King Arthur gathers a host, and leaves Mordred as steward of the realm, while he crosses the sea to make war on Lancelot. The latter sends a damsel to Arthur as his messenger, offering to spend his life in the Holy Land; but Gawain will hear of no agreement. Lancelot is besieged in his chief city; Gawain accuses him of treason, and challenges him to single combat; in this meeting Gawain is wounded in the head. The battle is repeated, with the same result as at first; Gawain, however, recovers, and is almost prepared for a third encounter, when King Arthur receives news of Mordred's treason, and is obliged to return to Britain.

The conclusion of the poem exhibits a union of two

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stories. William of Malmesbury related that the Britons considered Arthur to be still living, and expected his return. Geoffrey of Monmouth left the fate of the king in mystery, merely reciting that Arthur caused himself to be carried to the isle of Avalon, in order to be healed of his wound. Probably for the sake of the advantage to be obtained for the Abbey of Glastonbury, with which he had relations, William of Malmesbury, in a subsequent work (1140), chose to identify Glastonbury with Avalon, and to present the grave of the king as still in existence in the abbey; this invention, at a later day, was employed by Henry II., who, perhaps for purposes of political advantage, saw fit to exhume the remains of the Briton. The French prose romance followed the latter tale, representing that the fairy Morgain, sister of King Arthur, did indeed carry the letter from the battle-field in a boat, but subsequently caused his body to be interred at a chapel (la chappelle noire; see H. O. Sommer, Le Morte Darthur, by Syr Thomas Malory, London, 1891, vol. iii. pp. 267, 268), to which Arthur is represented as resorting after the battle with Mordred. The English poet, or rather the French version he followed, has substituted Glastonbury for the Black Chapel, and the name of Bedivere for Girflet, as Arthur's companion. The noble conclusion, scarce rivalled in its way in English literature, makes a grand and fitting close to Arthurian story.

Geoffrey of Monmouth. In the opinion of the present writer, the Historia Regum Britanniæ of Geoffrey, published about 1137, furnished the historical frame assumed in the poems of Crestien, and which subsequently in the prose romances underwent ornamentation and alteration. It will therefore be worth while to give an outline of Geoffrey's account.

Constantinus, brother of King Aldroen, of Lesser Brit-

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ain (Brittany, by distinction from Great Britain), is summoned to defend the people of the island against the Picts and Scots. Becoming king, and marrying a Roman lady, he has three sons, Constans, Aurelius Ambrosius, and Uter (Uther). Constans is murdered by the usurper Vortigern, and the tutors of the younger princes carry their charges to Little Britain, where they are brought up in the palace of the king.

Vortigern takes into his service the Saxons Hengist and Horsa, and marries Rowen, daughter of Hengist; the sons of Hengist are settled in North Britain. The Britons depose Vortigern and set up his son Vortimer, who expels the intruders; but Vortimer is poisoned by his stepmother Rowen, and Vortigern recovers his authority. The Saxons again invade Britain, and at a conference held in Ambrius, near Salisbury (the Almesbury of the English poem), treacherously destroy the British chiefs. Vortigern, to secure his release, is compelled to surrender the best part of his kingdom. Vortigern flies to Wales, and undertakes to erect a castle on Mount Erir (Mount of Eagles, Snowdon); the edifice falling as fast as erected, the soothsayers of Vortigern declare that the mortar must be wet with the blood of a boy who has never had a father; this child is found in Merlinus (Merlin), who is in part of demoniacal origin. When brought into the presence of the king, Merlin proves himself possessed of prophetic power, shows that the fall of the tower is due to the combat of two dragons, red and white, which typify the Saxons and British, and foretells the eventual triumph of the latter; Vortigern withdraws, and retires to a castle on the Wye.

Aurelius Ambrosius and his brother land in Britain, and Aurelius is made king; the new sovereign destroys Vortigern and Hengist; as a monument to the Britons slain near Salisbury, Merlin brings over from Ireland

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and erects in Britain the stones of the Giant's Dance (Stonehenge).

Pascentius, son of Vortigern, with an army of Saxons, attempts to avenge his father, but is defeated, and obtains help in Ireland; he lands in Wales, and Aurelius, being sick, sends his brother Uter in command of an army. On the eve of the battle appears a star like a dragon, emitting two rays; Merlin expounds the meteor to signify the death of Aurelius, the accession of Uter, and the birth to the latter of two children, of whom one shall be a mighty emperor. After the truth of the prophecy is proven by events, Uter, in memory of the vision, makes two dragons of gold, one of which he uses as his standard, whence his surname Pendragon, or Dragon's Head.

At an Easter festival in London, Uter falls in love with Igerna, wife of Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall. Gorlois flies to his domain, and places Igerna in Tintagel. By the aid of Merlin, Uter is metamorphosed into the shape of Gorlois, and obtains with Igerna an interview, of which the fruit is Arthur. Uter is attacked by the sons of Hengist, who are defeated and slain; nevertheless, encouraged by the illness of the king, the Saxons renew the war, and procure the death of Uter by poison; Britain falls into disorder, while the Saxons, under the command of Colgrin, lay waste the island as far as the Humber.

The nobles of Britain meet at Silchester, and induce Dubricius, Archbishop of the City of Legions (Caerleon on Usk), to consecrate as king Arthur, son of Uter, who at this time is but fifteen years of age, but shows such qualities as to win universal favor. He gathers an army and attacks the Saxons, the first battle being fought at the river Douglas (in Lincolnshire); Colgrin is defeated, and retires to York, where he is besieged by Arthur; but, the Saxon Cheldric arriving with succors from Germany, the king is obliged to retreat to London; he asks help of

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his cousin Hoel, king of Little Britain, who brings over fifteen thousand men. Thus reinforced, Arthur marches against the Saxons, who are besieging Lincoln, and defeats them before that town; he pursues the enemy to North Britain, where he surrounds them in the Caledonian forest; they surrender on condition that they shall be allowed to sail away without arms, but treacherously land at Totness and ravage South Britain; Arthur recrosses the island and fights a decisive battle at Bath, where he accomplishes marvellous feats of valor, with his own hand slaying four hundred and seventy men by means of his sword Caliburnus.

Leaving Cador to complete the destruction of the Saxons, Arthur returns to the north, and again reaches Alclud, where he receives Hoel; he pursues the Scots to the recesses of Lake Lomond, and spares them on condition of their becoming tributary. The war being thus ended, he returns to York, rebuilds the ruined churches, and restores order; Lot of Londonesia (Lyonesse, Lothian), who has married his sister Anna, he replaces in the country whence he has been exiled, together with his brothers, Urianus (Urien of the romances, father of Ewain) and Auguselus of Albania.

Britain being at peace, Arthur takes to wife Guanhumara, a lady of Roman descent, brought up in Cornwall by Cador, duke of that province.

In the following year the king fits out a fleet and reduces Ireland, Iceland, Gothland, and the Orkneys; after this, during twelve years, he remains at peace.

The king of Norway, dying, leaves his kingdom to Lot; the latter, unable to obtain his inheritance, appeals to Arthur, who sails to Norway and reduces that country, and also Denmark; with the youth of these lands, he invades Gaul, and in single combat at Paris slays Flollo, the Roman tribune of the province; for nine years he

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makes war in Gaul, subdues all its regions, and bestows its cities upon his knights. Finally he returns to Britain, where at Pentecost he determines to assume the crown.

The coronation takes place at the City of Legions; after the ceremony, while the king is distributing largesse and assigning fiefs, appear ambassadors from the Roman senate, who censure him for withholding the tribute paid by Britain since the days of Julius Cæsar, and summon him to Rome for trial. Arthur rejoins that he will visit Rome, but to receive tribute, not pay it.

Arthur leaves his nephew Mordredus (Mordred or Modred), and the queen, as regents of Britain, and crosses into Gaul; a Roman army passes the Alps, and battles take place about Autun, in which the Britons are successful. In these wars figure Arthur's nephew, Walgainus (Gawain), Eventus (Ewain), and Ider. Caius (Kay) and Bedver, Arthur's seneschal and butler, are slain.

As Arthur is preparing to cross the Alps, he is informed of the treachery of Mordred, who has seized on the country, and whom Guanhumara has wickedly married; he therefore crosses the water and lands in Kent; a battle takes place, in which Walgainus is slain. Mordred falls back to Winchester, and the queen takes the veil in Caerleon.

Mordred retreats to Cornwall, and makes a final stand at the river Cambula (Camel); a battle is fought, in which perish the greater part of both armies. King Arthur, mortally wounded, is carried to the isle of Avalon in order to be cured; he leaves the crown of Britain to Constantine, son of Cador, in the five hundred and forty-second year of the incarnation of Our Lord.

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